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THEOLOGY

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WILLIAM FREDERICK COBB, D.D.



The Church's Outlook Series.



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THE CHURCH'S OUTLOOK FOR THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY:

A SERIES OF HANDBOOKS

ON CURRENT ECCLESIASTICAL PROBLEMS.

GENERAL EDITOR:

JOHN HENRY BURN, B.D.,

RECTOR OF DEER,

EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF ABERDEEN.

THE CHURCH'S OUTLOOK

THEOLOGY
OLD AND NEW

BY

WILLIAM FREDERICK COBB, D.D.,

Rector of St. Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate.



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PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR OF THE SERIES.

The Problems which will be discussed in this Series of Handbooks are all of primary importance to such as take an intelligent interest in the welfare of the Anglican Communion ; and the object aimed at is to treat these problems in a sympathetic and broad-minded spirit, which may help to bring about a better understanding among Churchpeople who hold divergent views on ecclesiastical affairs.

The several Writers, while not attempting to disguise their own convictions, will take great care to present their theses in such a manner as to give offence to none—recognising that there is ample room within the Catholic Church, as founded by the Master and as established in England, for “all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness.”

Each Writer is responsible for his own statements alone.

The General Editor has allowed considerable latitude in the expression of opinion, in the belief

that more permanent advantage is likely to result from this policy than from any attempt to gloss over difficulties with pious platitudes.

In each case, so far as is practicable, the subject in hand will be introduced by an historical sketch, not of inordinate length, yet sufficiently full to indicate the course of development to the stage at present reached ; and suggestions will be made as to the lines on which it is thought that further progress may be attempted with a reasonable prospect of success.

J. H. BURN.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The following chapters have been written not for the professed scholar or the advanced student, but for that increasing number of busy and perplexed men who desire to keep themselves abreast of the theology of the day. It has not fallen, therefore, within the scope of this little volume to discuss critical methods, or to give in detail the reasons, often cumulative, which have induced the conclusion. For the most part, indeed, the conclusion has been given and the reasons have been suggested only. Nor has it seemed necessary to quote authorities, though the author believes that authority may be given for every statement advanced in the following pages. His one aim has been to set forth as plainly, and as simply as possible the leading features of the theology which Christian bodies have either come to hold, or are preparing themselves to accept. The result, it is hoped, will be to assure timid or anxious believers that the religion of Jesus Christ has nothing whatever to fear or to surrender when brought face to face with the forces of modern thought.

W. F. COBB.

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CONDISCIPULIS MEIS
APUD
SANCTÆ ETHELBURGÆ
ECCLESIAM

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A HIGH literary authority has warned us that we should not prophesy unless we know. This volume, it may be feared, will be obnoxious to that warning. There are, however, some souls ready to incur the charge of rashness and the risk of failure by intimating to their fellows what they hope or believe may come to pass in the not too distant future. Such men, of whom the present writer is one, find themselves utterly unable to be satisfied with past achievements, whether their own or of the community which they serve. They count nought done while ought remains to do. They are aware that much danger lies around the path of the pioneer, but at the same time they are quite convinced that the pioneer's work is essential to well-being. They would take the risk for the sake of the prize. They are content to walk by faith and not by sight. They look for no other reward than that deepening of their faith which comes from practical loyalty to its present onward course.

There are two ways in which the present volume may be regarded. It may be regarded, like most

things, either positively, or negatively. Negatively, it is a protest against an exaggerated and foolish insistence on the exclusive merits of the past. Not that it desires to deny the treasures which the past contains, or has any intention of performing the feat known as wiping the slate clean and starting afresh. As has been well said, the past is to us for instruction or for warning, but for imitation never. Nor is there any popular maxim more false than that which declares that history repeats itself, and suggests, therefore, that all we have to do is to see the identity of living movements with similar movements in some distant century, and then apply to the present a judgment based solely upon observation of that dead and buried activity. History does repeat itself, but always with a difference. And the difference is, to say the least of it, of quite as much importance as the similarity.

If the negative aspect of this little work may be dwelt upon for a moment, it might be not inappropriate to insist that the past is too much with us, and is too often regarded as the despotic tyrant whose lightest word must rule the present. One who believes that we are saved by hope and not by retrospect might fairly ask why we should be compelled to accept the verdict of any single age as all that need be sought for in the determination of the emergent problems of to-day. It was no disparagement to the fourth century to say that while its testimony to the traditional deposit of faith might fairly be regarded as final, yet its setting of that faith in a frame provided by Greek philosophy is

necessarily open to modification, if the human mind comes to find a better setting. Yet there are too many Christians, at once devoted and intelligent, who treat the Nicene Creed as something more than an historical statement of the Church's traditional belief at a given period. They seem to think that they do it greater honour by treating it as a sort of credal charm, every word of which must be carefully safeguarded and repeated if it is to be of avail to their spiritual health.

Again, there are those who with Hallam recognise the ninth century as the age of the Bishops. Indeed, they do what Hallam with his greater historical knowledge refrained from doing, they regard the power of the Bishops then as making wholly for good, and because the influence of the Church as represented by her Bishops was so dominant in that century, they would fain see the Bishops wield an equally powerful influence to-day. In this, they seem to think the salvation of the Church lies, but they are mistaken, and their mistake arises from the habit of mind which seeks for truth only in the past.

Others look with longing eyes to the thirteenth century, which has been described as the age of the Popes—the age which saw the establishment of the friars of St. Francis and St. Dominic, and the wonderful revival of religion which their early zeal brought with it. But, even if we granted that the mighty power of Innocent and Boniface was the best for the then requirements of the Church, why should we be such blind worshippers of the past as to wish

to restore such broken idols to-day? Let the dead past bury its dead. The very fact that no monasteries were founded after the friars had come in might serve as a useful reminder that even in the thirteenth century one great institution of the past had ceased to win the affections of men. Why then should we be called upon to do to-day what the thirteenth century itself did not do?

The same remark must be made about the sixteenth century, which is the century that those who have come to hate the Roman system of religion with a cold, fixed hatred, exalt to the skies; that century which saw the old giant's authority questioned, and his sceptre taken from him. But why should it therefore be assumed that there is any finality about the progressiveness of the Reformers? We have been reminded lately that they spoke in a time of storm and stress, when no judgment could be wholly calm and collected, and that therefore there is some reason for our going behind their conclusions and for the re-introduction of much that they discarded. It would be far truer to say that because they were pioneers we may be called upon to go further than they went in the work of reformation, according as the duties now laid upon the Church may require. As a matter of fact, a not insignificant movement is going on in the Lutheran Church of Germany, in the direction of developing and carrying out still further the main principles of Church life laid down by Martin Luther and his colleagues.

From these few examples it may easily be seen

what the negative character of the present work involves. It does not involve any depreciation of the past; still less is it destructive. It is not a revolution which is desired, but the recognition of an evolution. We would not content ourselves with gloating merely over the treasures which have come down to us. We would rather use them to aid the further progress of humanity than keep them buried in a napkin.

From the positive side it is no less important to insist on the duty of maintaining a progressive attitude. In the battle of life, and above all in the battle of spiritual life, not to go on is to stand still, and to stand still is stagnation, and stagnation leads to death. As a matter of fact, no age ever has stood still, and it is only our distance from the past which deludes us into the belief that any one of its periods had a fixity all its own. The law of life is change, and no century has any immunity from that law. The sole question put to to-day is whether it shall change for the worse or for the better; whether its movement shall be backward or forward. Least of all can it be said that the present age shows any signs of immobility. Nay! it is one of the loudest and most frequent complaints that we are moving too fast; a complaint which comes most often from the faint-hearted, or from the faithless.

In the domain of religion this law of movement has been made painfully apparent for some time past. A far-seeing person prophesied at the beginning of the Oxford Movement that its inevitable tendency would be towards liberalism. He probably

meant that out of the collision between the Evangelical and Oxford Movements would be struck a spark which would throw light on deeper problems underlying them both. That prophecy is in process of fulfilment.

It must not be forgotten, moreover, that the progress of physical science has profoundly modified the later conceptions of God, the soul, and the world. Faiths which were possible and natural in days when the earth was regarded as the centre of the visible universe, become impossible and unreasonable when the sun takes the place of the earth. Investigations into the properties of matter have made faith not more but less difficult. Yet, at the same time, they have destroyed very much which man could hold as naturally following from a belief in a dualistic conception of the world. With our fathers spirit and matter were eternally opposite, or at least one of the worst enemies of spirit was matter. With us the tendency is either to treat matter as a gross form of spirit, or spirit as a highly attenuated modification of matter. Nor must the solvent influence of travelling; of the post; of the telegraph; of all those products of civilisation by which thought becomes the property of the whole race of men, be overlooked in a discussion of the direction in which movement is going. Previous periods in the history of man have shown an eclecticism similar to that which prevails to-day. Never, perhaps, had the spirit of eclecticism so wide an area over which to work. Never before have so many divergent sections of the great human family brought their

contributions to the common stock. The very collection of so many conceptions of the world necessitates some philosophic unity, in religion particularly, the nature of which we can at present but dimly guess at. The fact, however, that we can but conjecture is no reason why we should refuse to go forward a single step because we cannot see the end of the road.

One other feature, which only once before meets us in history, is the interpenetrative influence of the East on the West, and not less markedly of the West on the East. European civilisation, with England at the head, is profoundly modifying the thought of the East at its very headquarters in India. Caste is losing its hold over the people. A dreamy philosophy is staring piteously, with perplexity at the busy, pushing activity of its Western conqueror. Pantheism in its hydra-headed forms is coming to be regarded as not necessarily the last word of philosophy. The old bases of religious belief and practice are being insidiously and more or less unconsciously undermined.

On the other hand, the influence of the East on the West since the days of Schopenhauer has been no less powerful if less obvious. Since Tennyson sang of the Higher Pantheism we may be content to confess that in some sense we are all pantheists now. In Christian theology the immanence of God has been always maintained from the days of St. Paul onwards. The difference to-day is that a greater emphasis is being placed upon it, and from it is being sought the solution of those ethical and

spiritual problems which are at once the curse and the glory of our race.

It might not be impertinent to add that the general acceptance of evolution as a principle of God's relationship to the world has led us far from the religious standpoint of our fathers, and that its influence on our religious thought is not yet spent. The whole activity of the higher critics, as applied to the Bible, starts from the assumption, taken over from biological science, that evolution underlies the history of the Christian religion as surely as it underlies the origin and the multiplication of species.

With these preliminary remarks I proceed to deal in more detail with a few of the problems in religion set us to-day, with a view to indicate, if possible, the direction in which answers to them will be found by our children in the twentieth century.

RELIGION AND THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER II.

RELIGION AND THEOLOGY.

BEFORE we attempt to forecast the theology of the twentieth century a clear distinction must be made between religion and theology. For distinct the two are. It needs no prophet to tell us that a bed-ridden, ignorant old woman may be a saint of God, may be religious, that is, to the highest degree, and yet may know nothing about prevenient grace, works of supererogation, substance and accident, ousia and hypostatic union, and the hundred other terms which mark man's successive failures to sound with his plummet of reason the unfathomable depths of Life. On the other hand, a Cyril, a Pius, an Innocent, may be profound theologians and yet utter strangers to that spirit and temper which are universally recognised as lying at the core of all real religion. Luther, with his *pectus facit theologum*, deprecates scientific theology, though no man has been responsible for more. The Jesuits, it is to be feared, when they clapped Molinos and two hundred of his fellow Quietists into prison were more anxious for orthodoxy than for religion.

If then the two are distinct, in what does the distinction rest? To take religion first. Fear first gave birth to the gods, say some; and the saying is

repeated by sciolists of to-day, as if it was from fear alone that religion came. Or, said Mr. Grant Allen, following Mr. Herbert Spencer too slavishly, man feared or loved his father when dead, and hence religion is nothing but ancestor-worship; forgetting that man has other outlooks on the spirit world besides those supplied by ghosts. According to others all religion has been developed out of magic, a view which is almost certainly preposterous in the strict sense. Dr. Tiele, after discussing religious development through two volumes, tells us that religion is in one word piety, which is more true than illuminative. "In religion," says Dr. Jevons, "three elements must be allowed for, the mystical, the practical, and the speculative." This is like Dr. Liddon's "Religion is the bond between God and man's whole nature: in God the heart finds its happiness, the reason its rule of truth, the will its freedom." Religion is practically inseparable from theology. Kant made religion the knowledge of our practical duties considered as God's commandments. Finally, Matthew Arnold identified religion with conduct, or a life in harmony with that stream of tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness. Morality is touched by emotion and religion is the product.

A plain man may wonder at the diversity of views about so common an object, and may perhaps scornfully conclude that it takes a great deal of learning sometimes to miss the obvious. But in judging so hastily he would do our learned professors much injustice. They are right in what they affirm. They

are in error when they take no account of omitted factors. They tell the truth, but not the whole truth. They do not appear to keep sufficiently before their minds the historical development of religion, but instead, confine their attention to religion either as it is, or as it reveals itself in its earliest known origins. In the latter, it is confused, illogical, and free from self-consciousness. It blends in one inharmonious whole theology, ethics, art, and worship. Its elements are not graded because they are not distinguished. Later, however, when reflection has set in, and criticism, however crude and ill-equipped, has begun its destructive process, the theology, *i.e.*, primitive mythology, begins to be questioned. Softer and more humane feelings elevate the ethics, whether of the tribe or of the sanctuary, on to a higher plane. Human sacrifices are succeeded by those of beasts, and they by corn offerings. Art takes a nobler form by the rejection of lower subjects and the exercise of more self-restraint, and so witnesses to a more refined taste and a greater intellectuality. Then finally the time comes when, in the greater complexity of social life, differentiation sets in, and religion, though, like the Pope, it may sweep in the whole of life under some such description of its proper subject matter as faith and morals, yet is by common consent limited in its practical activities to one only of the many fields it occupied previously. It gains in intension what it has lost in extension.

This is precisely what the common feeling of nine out of ten men, at any rate in Protestant countries,

has come to. Of course, in countries where the full sway of the old Roman temper is felt, that is, where no progress has been made, or next to none, this conclusion does not hold. But in countries such as ours religion has come to be limited for most practical purposes to conduct. This may readily be seen by the tests which are instinctively applied to determine the religious value of a man. Is he straight in business? Dutiful to his household? Is his heart ready to sympathise, and his hand to relieve? These are the questions by which everybody judges his neighbour's religion, if not his own, and they supply a testimony, the more convincing because generally unconscious of the true character of religion in modern eyes. Matthew Arnold has won, and we all have accepted his views, the only difference being that some of us frankly admit it, others act on their deeper conviction till they are challenged, and the rest lack sufficient power of self-analysis to know what their belief really is.

Religion, then, by a long process of differentiation has thrown off art and theology from being her life companions and working partners, and has con-nived at their setting up business for themselves. It is true that she watches their career with a friendly eye, and is not above taking a hint from them now and then. It is also true that from time to time she finds herself encroaching on one or other of her old friends' domains, as *e.g.*, when her subjects meet for worship and have to seek the guidance of art for their ceremonial, or when they meet to discuss the beliefs, which have come down to them from days

when theology had not yet gone forth like Lot to seek a home for itself. But these overlappings are very slowly becoming less frequent, and are engaging less and less attention as time goes on. Religious men are turning away with growing dislike from questions of abstract theology and ritual, because they feel that these are of their life a thing apart.

This brings us to a consideration of the place of theology in the life of religion. For the fact that religion has come to be regarded as pre-eminently conduct ordered by the will of God, is no reason for assuming that it is exclusively so. As a matter of fact, just as some sort of ceremonial there must be where two or three are gathered together for worship, so some sort of theology there must be where there is a religious life. I am to order my life according to the will of God, am I, if I am to be counted worthy to be enrolled in the ranks of the soldiers of religion? Very good, but this opens up at once an enquiry. What do you mean by this God to Whom I am to look for orders, and where is the Red Book in which those orders are inscribed? In other words, any exhortation, even the simplest, to lead the religious life inevitably suggests a number of theological questions, which the mind of man, being constituted as it is, cannot shelve, but must find some answer to. Those answers, when systematized, make up a theology, and that theology, when adopted by a Church, becomes its dogmas. So that, as it appears, ethics lead up to morality, and morality to God, and God is an object for the reason of man as well as for his affections

and will. Theology is a necessity for an intellectual being just because he is intellectual.

An example of the pervasive character of theology may be drawn from two significant incidents in our modern religious life. One is the embittered quarrel about religious teaching in our Board Schools, and the other is the failure of the negative school of theologians to secure adherents, or exert any influence. For three years the religious question, as it was called, raged over the School Board area throughout the country, and paralysed the efficient working of at least one large Board. The one side, under the plea of undenominationalism fought against theology being thrust down the throats of children, and the other fought for its adoption as the right and proper religious food for babes and sucklings. The former urged, with much plausibility, the incapacity of children to assimilate dogmas and understand questions of the schools. They further insisted that all that was really necessary was one thing—to know what was right and do it, and that anything beyond that was of the nature, if not of sin, at all events of sectarianism. Their opponents, unable to deny altogether the validity of this mode of arguing, replied that if a parent thought differently he had a right as a parent and a ratepayer to have his child taught theology of his own approved pattern. What does not seem to have occurred to either party is that there is a deeper question involved. All the talk was of rights and wrongs, as of one party against the other. It would have been far more to the purpose if both

had devoted a little more attention to the subject of duties—the duty of the man, the parent, and the ratepayer, to find out what right reason had to say about the theology under dispute. If this duty had been adequately considered it would have been discovered that the question to be settled was not whether theology was to be taught to children, but what theology, and by whom. But such an enquiry would have demanded a self-restraint, a freedom from party passion, a learning and a self-effacement which it were quite quixotic to expect from any who are immersed in the perfecting of machinery, and are concerned only with that blessed thing, practical politics.

We find a similar sterility afflicting the school in our midst, which treats dogma in the spirit of the famous “hang theology” formula. If by “hang theology” you mean to warn off theology from grounds where it has no business, we have no more to say. Or, if you mean to launch your anathema against a particular kind of theology which you consider untrue, not in accordance with facts, again we say that we have no complaint to make. But if we are to take your protest in its widest acceptance as implying your dislike of all theology of whatever kind, and however employed, then we are bound to point out that you are tilting against the nature of things, and that not you, but they, will come off victorious in the long run. The school of Arnold and Stanley has failed to exert any corporate influence on English Christianity because of its depreciation of theology in the lump. It forgot that

no Church has ever been able to dispense with a theology any more than spirit with a form or thought with language. Their excuse—which is also their glory—is that they came at a transition period, when men were beginning to feel the emptiness of current theology, but were too deeply thrown into its shadow to be able to see the light that was rising in the East of the coming day. It will be the shame of us, who have entered into their labours, if we do not build up such a theology as they would have approved of had they lived to see the dawn. They cleared the jungle, but only that we might plant it anew with a higher and healthier vegetation.

THEOLOGY AS SCIENTIFIC.

CHAPTER III.

THEOLOGY AS SCIENTIFIC.

FROM what has been said in the previous chapters, one characteristic of our coming theology emerges clearly. It will regain its scientific character, to the great relief of earnest, but distressed, religion. For if one note has been sounded more loudly than another in recent times, by those who are counted somewhat in the higher walks of thought, it has been the worthlessness of the Christian theology of to-day. It rests on assumptions, it is said, which have never been proved, and never can be proved, which are preached as infallible truths, given us, like the image of the Ephesian Diana, from heaven itself. We are not concerned to defend the ubiquitous dogmatist of to-day, who consigns to such outer darkness as he can the unhappy people who cannot repeat his pet Shibboleth. The feeble men and women, who cannot stand upright without a crutch, still hop up to him with the open-mouthed awe which flatters his vanity, and he and they may be left well enough to keep each other in countenance. But he and his automata have long since ceased to be ought but a negligible quantity in the religious thought of the day, and it is not to them that men look for

guidance, nor is it by them that our modern theology is to be judged, at least if its judges are of a fair and candid spirit.

Judges of this kind will, perhaps, admit, on a little further consideration, that a sweeping condemnation of Christian theology is unjust if it can be shown that it is not necessary for it to cut itself off from all acquaintance with the scientific spirit and from scientific methods. Nay, it is possible to go a step further, and to urge in its defence that it has striven constantly to make itself scientific, even at times when its failure may seem to us now to have been most complete.

The attempt to transform Christianity into a sharply-defined theological system began very early, as early indeed as its vital contact with pagan philosophy. This fact has been stated by no one more exactly than by Harnack in the following words:—

“In gnosticism the acute stage of a process was
“reached, which began early in the Church, and
“which underwent a slow and distinct evolution
“under the Catholic system. The gnostics were the
“*theologians* of the first century; they were the
“first to transform Christianity into a system of
“doctrines (dogmas); they were the first to treat
“tradition and the primitive Christian Scriptures
“systematically; they undertook to set forth Chris-
“tianity as the absolute religion, and they, therefore,
“placed it in opposition to the other religions, to
“that of the Old Testament as well (not alone to
“Judaism); but the absolute religion, which they

“coupled with Christ, was to them essentially identical with the results of the philosophy of religion, for which they had now found the basis in a revelation. They were, accordingly, a class of Christians who essayed, through a sharp onset, to conquer Christianity for Hellenic culture, and Hellenic culture for Christianity, and they thereby abandoned the Old Testament in order to fitly close up the breach between the two opposing forces. Christianity became an occult theosophy (revealed metaphysics and apparition philosophy permeated with the Platonic spirit and with Pauline ideas), constructed out of the material of an old cultus-wisdom, which was acquired through mysteries and the illumined understanding, defined by a keen, and, in part, true criticism of the Old Testament religion and the scant faith of the Church.”

Gnosticism then, within the Church, was the earliest attempt to construct for Christianity a scientific theology. The theosophists of to-day, who have persuaded themselves that a secret and wonderful esoteric doctrine has been handed down in select circles from age to age will be satisfied that so far as the Christian community accepted gnostic suggestions, it was the lucky finder of a pearl of great price to which it had no just title. They will also hold that so far as this esoteric teaching was absorbed, its science was not only accurate but final. But we, who believe in no such tradition, will reject all finality to this so-called science, while being at the same time quite ready to admit that it was up to

the scientific level of the day. Compared with the attainments of modern science of all kinds, that level was indeed low. That single fact will suffice to warrant us in exonerating the early theologians from the charge of folly or presumption, while declining to accept their conclusions as valid for all time. Their system was the best possible then. It is far from the best possible now.

If anyone objects that these early Gnostics were heretics, whose attempt to capture the Church was defeated by the Catholic and orthodox party, and that, therefore, their theology, whatever its character, is no criterion of Christian science, the rejoinder is obvious. *Grecia capta ferum victorem cepit.* Gnosticism, like Montanism, was formally condemned and cast out, but in thus dying it infected its victor. It passed over into the orthodox Fathers. Their methods, their spirit, and much of their material were a direct legacy from the Gnostic heresiarchs, and can only be understood by one who has seen their gigantic, and often monstrous prototypes in the Gnostic speculations of an earlier day. Augustine, Tertullian, Origen, Irenæus, would never have written or represented Christianity as they did, if Valentinus, Philo, or Plato, had never written. The "work of the Hellenic spirit upon the Gospel soil" may be easily measured by anybody who will compare the luring, but undogmatic teaching of the Gospels with the Creed of Chalcedon. The Gnostic controversy was the bridge by which the former crossed over into the latter.

We have selected this incident in Church history

for our illustration, because it shows with such clearness two things :—

(1). The inability of religion to dispense with a theology; and

(2). The want of finality which attends the theology of every age.

It is with this latter point that we are more nearly concerned here.

That the theology of the first ages could not boast the character of finality is evident enough from one very simple consideration. The theology of any age is the quintessence of its critical attainments. These in their turn depend for their value on a wide experience of life, on an adequate acquaintance with human nature, and on an extensive view of history. To secure these again, much leisure, widely-diffused wealth, and varied knowledge of other countries and ages are indispensable. These are precisely what the age before us did not possess to anything like the extent that we possess them now. Comparison is the very breath of the nostrils of all true science, and this was denied the first few ages of our era through the want of those material means of communication which are the boast and comfort of our more fortunate age.

The theology, the art, the science of any given age are an interlocked whole. Where the science is imperfect, the theology must be so too. And if science knows no finality neither can theology, for theology is but that system of thought which uses scientific methods with the scientific temper to state the truths of religion. The assertion, which was

made twenty years ago, more frequently than now, that all human sciences are progressive save theology, which is fixed, because its content was given once for all—it is not said when—is a pure delusion. It is devoid of all support in history, the Bible, common-sense, or the facts of religion itself, and is nothing but the feeble echo of what obscurantists think ought to be, not an exact statement of what as a matter of fact is.

It would not be difficult to show that the labours of the Schoolmen were marked by the same two notes of (1) science, and (2) want of finality. Whatever M. Renan may say, with his declaration that for one thousand years human life was in a state of suspended animation; or Mr. Clodd with his, that the glacial period of thought set in with Christianity, it is to show gross ignorance of the Middle Age to accuse it of being intellectually dormant. No doubt, its science was ludicrously baseless, its worship of Aristotle laughable, and its respect for authority a thick covering cast over its face, but in spite of all its shortcomings, its Schoolmen, and let it be added, their conquered adversaries too, carried the torch of science aloft, and, dim though its light was, the hand which carried it was firm. The country it illuminated was small enough, but the chief wonder is, under the fears and terrors of the age, that it should have existed at all, or found a path to throw light on.

A similar remark applies to the Reformation period. Then men's minds had been expanded by a more intimate acquaintance with classical history,

by the discovery of a new Continent, by the power which the printing-press was slowly but surely exercising. Their science was creeping upward, and their views of life and death were suffering a change by comparison of classical with Catholic ideals. The first result in those Teutonic countries, which did care enough for Christianity to wish to reform it, was a re-handling of the problem of theology, one result of which was the putting forth of a series of Confessions of Faith in which the new theology expressed itself with stammering lips and a faltering tongue. The Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Shorter Catechism, were but some of the half-articulate cries of the new child which had come to the birth, and they testified to its vigour, and gave promise of wondrous speech, when it came to years of discretion.

But here again no finality was given, whatever may have been the hopes of the Fathers of the Reformation. Indeed, these deserve our constant gratitude for having marked out a new path along which we, their children, may travel with comparative ease and security. But neither they nor we could possibly see whither that path was to lead. That is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord our God. It should be sufficient for us to hold fast tenaciously—aggressively if occasion requires—to the root principle of the Reformation, that reason in man is the candle of the Lord, and that by reason we are to prove all things and hold fast to that which after proof is found good. To those who hanker after the intellectual flesh-pots

of the thirteenth century, or the manna of the sixteenth, a stern voice says, "Fools, your reward is neither here nor there." It is, at bottom, cowardice and want of faith—want of faith and cowardice—which prevent us children of the Reformation from trusting to the present guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Where are we to stop?" is a question which none but a man, void of living faith, would ask. It was not found in the mouth of Abraham, when God called him to take up an unknown life in a land remote from his country and his kindred, nor should it be found in ours.

The theology then of to-day, and of to-morrow, must be progressive. It will not, therefore, be destructive or chauvinistic. It will treat the past with freedom, indeed, but still with reverence and sympathy, while refusing decisively to take its dicta without examination, as a slave may take the orders of his master. But for all that, its master bias will be towards the future, and there will its heart be. It will count nothing done while ought remains to do, and will forget the things which are behind.

A special duty is imposed on the theology of the new century to keep this steady look forward. For never before, in the known history of the world, has any century seen such rapid and bewildering changes in thought and outlook as have been the fortune of the century which has just closed. It is not only in the domain of physical science that immense advances have been made, nor only in the material resources which are a pre-requisite for all growth in civilization. The social habits of society

have been modified by a thousand under-currents of thought and feeling; the very foundations of morals, as our fathers considered them, have been assailed with a quite astonishing vigour, and have changed their character somewhat by the very necessity of repairing them in defence. Timid souls complain of a general laxity of morals and predict gloomily a second deluge. They seem to under-rate the invincible healthiness of human nature, which always asserts itself sooner or later, and the sooner, perhaps, in proportion as the deviation from the standard has been the greater. This is why others of a less timid mood cast their four anchors from the stern and wait for the day, judging that after the storm will come a purer and calmer atmosphere. Their true hope is not in the present, but in the future.

Physical science, a new sociology, a quickened sense of the solidarity of mankind, all of which are contributing to the making of our future theology, are reinforced by a new philosophy and a new psychology.

The principle of evolution, to which we shall have occasion to refer later on, has exercised a tremendous force on modern thought, and has produced a revolution in every department of knowledge. A quite new psychology, with re-distributed relations between our faculties and our activities, and with the beginnings of a science of will-power, is just shivering on the brink of new discoveries, and is pointing the way to an exact science which promises to put the relations of man to God on a more

verifiable footing than ever they were before. All these and other movements of thought have been at work among us, and are still profoundly modifying our conceptions of God, the World, and the Soul, and it is the province of theology, which we have seen already is a progressive science, to enlarge her borders sufficiently to incorporate all that has been found true in modern research. That she had not done so was the most potent cause in producing that sterility from which she was suffering during the closing years of the just-expired century.

Will her children be wise enough and bold enough to lead their mother forth into the Promised Land of Truth, in the years that are now before us? That is a question on which hangs the destiny not only of theology, but in some degree of religion as well.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

IN endeavouring to form an estimate of the religion which is likely to prevail in the twentieth century, we begin naturally with its idea of God. Of course, the man who is the slave of phrases and of naïve sensationalism, does not know, and does not believe, that the word God is capable of more than one interpretation. Anyone, however, who reflects knows that no term covers more ambiguity. God is the name given, properly speaking, to man's highest. It is often given to something less than the highest, and what is more, man's conception of what is highest varies from age to age, and from country to country.

Let us notice one or two of these variations by way of example. Take first the evidence of the Old Testament. Indications are not lacking that there was a time when the Jews believed in a plurality of Gods, as the plural Elohim clearly indicates. The name El-Shaddai lets daylight into a period when the Jews worshipped a God, Who was the God of the mountains, and walked on the high places of the earth. Yahweh, as the Psalms clearly show, was once the God Who manifested Himself in the thunder and lightning, on the mountain top, or in

the flash and fury of the storm cloud. He made the winds His messengers, and the lightning-flash His minister; He made the cloud His chariot, and walked upon the wings of the wind. Later, He was a God Who demanded strict ceremonial purity, and was punctilious about the mode of approach to Him. He became still later a God Who revealed Himself as the Thrice Holy. Finally, in the Second Isaiah, He shines out as One Whose characteristic is grace and tenderness. He feeds His flock like a shepherd and gently leads those that are with young.

We sometimes speak of the Christian idea of God, and we are not incorrect in so speaking if we admit that the idea, within limits, admits of variations. The East did not see through the same spectacles as the West. Eastern Christianity has always laid more stress on God as the Word sweetly ordering all things, than as the stern Legislator, Who imposes His law on a backsliding people. The Western Church reverses this view. Ever since the days which saw the influence of Tertullian and his disciple St. Augustine, the harsher, and therefore lower view, has prevailed amongst us. The Christian idea of God is a phrase which is intended to assert the belief in the Trinity as essential to Christian theology, and so it is. It often, however, conceals another important fact, and that is that there has always been allowed a great latitude of interpretation as to what this doctrine really does mean. It is in the assertion of its right to vary this interpretation that the Church of the twentieth century will find its own idea of God.

To forecast with any accuracy what will be requires an intimate knowledge of what has been. The ground of theology to-day is strewn with the ruins of dead or dying theologies. They have had their day and they are ceasing to be. The Calvinistic idea of God was precise with all the rigid precision which might be expected from one who was both a Frenchman and a lawyer. No doubt it had its usefulness in the age which gave it birth, but it is no longer useful but noxious and nauseous. It sprang from a proposition that the highest attribute of God was inexplicable, ineffable, arbitrary Will. He was so far removed from common humanity with all its imperfections, that the utmost honour that could be paid Him was to regard Him as doing what He would, as exercising His will without the necessity of consulting the counsel of that will. Accordingly, He was represented as predestinating without any possibility of our knowing why, some few of His creatures to eternal bliss and leaving the remaining obnoxious to eternal woe.

This belief is impossible to any enlightened Christian to-day. Why? Because we have advanced to a higher standpoint and have found a loftier conception of the Deity. We might therefore prophesy with perfect safety that, whatever the idea of God entertained by the twentieth century it will certainly not be anything like that taught by John Calvin.

Again, among the many instruments of man's education which the nineteenth century has used, there stands prominently forward the principle of evolu-

tion. By evolution in its most general form is understood a process in which cause and effect are continuously interlocked. Every phenomenon is an eternal mother as well as daughter. Creation *uno actu*, which was the belief of our grandfathers is an impossible belief to-day. We are more convinced than ever that out of nothing nothing comes, and that whatever creation may mean, it does not, and cannot, mean that what at one moment was not, the next moment was. Indeed, the origin and the ending of anything are to us inconceivable. Again, it is obvious that the principle of evolution must effect a very radical change in our estimate of the wisdom of God. With all reverence be it said, it has made us adore far more deeply God's wisdom, because it has made it more human in character. A wisdom which threw off a universe at one impulse, complete and rounded, may awe us into fearful silence; a wisdom which with infinite patience carries out its far-off design through aeon after aeon, battling, as it were, with its intractable material, suffering itself to be thwarted, or, at all events, delayed, by the waywardness of our self-will, which never stops, yet never hastes, which is often cruel, but cruel only to be kind, is a wisdom which calls forth not only our submission and our fear, but our sympathy and our worship.

Once more then we might affirm that the twentieth century will be able to find room in its idea of God, for that patience and that wisdom which are manifested so pathetically by the principle of evolution.

Hand in hand with evolution is the great principle which above all others adorns the triumphal chariot of nineteenth century thought—the principle of law and order. Our forefathers, especially in the primitive state, were not wholly devoid of some belief in their world being capable of becoming a cosmos instead of a chaos, but their knowledge of the order of the universe compared with ours, was that of an infant crying in the night compared with the massive attainments of an Aristotle or a Herbert Spencer. We have come to see the boundaries of order pushed back further and further, till it is now an axiom that even where order cannot be discerned, yet it must exist ready to show itself when we are fitted to see it. What has been is a prophecy of what will be, and the twentieth century will take up the conception where the nineteenth left it.

It is too early yet for us to apply this unifying principle of law to every department of theology; tradition, ignorance, prejudice, are three giants which bar the way; but this is as certain as anything can be, that no ethical dogma which shall contradict the fundamental principle that the universe is under law—uniform, inviolable law, will be a dogma of the future. Miracles will not be denied, but they will be understood to be particular examples of some law which had not been discovered in the days when men regarded them as special interpositions of God's power, interruptions of the usual order under which the world is governed.

Babbage's machine, with its curious departures

from the apparent law of its working, showing to be in it a hitherto unsuspected law, will have the widest possible parallel in the world seen by the twentieth century.

That century will then teach an idea of God, where caprice, or irregular modes of action, will find no place.

When we take up a volume of theology of the eighteenth century and observe its method of dealing with the doctrine of the Being of God, we feel unconsciously that we are out of sympathy with it to a very large extent. Writers of the age of Toland, or of Archdeacon Paley, were more concerned with the problems which circled round the question of the First Great Cause of all things, than with those which belong to religion proper. No doubt, it is true that the ordinary person, with his vague idea of God, thinks of Him only as the explanation of all that exists, but this is a metaphysical, rather than a religious belief, and the stress to-day is on the latter, rather than on the former. We seem inclined to pass by as insoluble the cosmogonical conundrum of how the One became the Many. We are more drawn to ask ourselves how out of the Many we can find the One. In other words, we are far more keen to track out the path of religious duty than to know precisely the why and wherefore of the universe.

This consideration leads me to suggest two reflections. One is that it is not without a purpose that the Church is insisting that God is to be approached through the door of personality. We

admit that though we may apprehend Him, to use an old scholastic metaphor, we can never comprehend Him. We know too, that in trying to apprehend Him at all we must do so by means of the highest of His manifestations, and not by anything lower than the highest. Unquestionably, the highest thing that we know in our experience, is our own personality. It is by this, therefore, that we must interpret God, and seek after Him if haply we may find Him. A human person, however deficient, is higher than the blind, unconscious force, which seems to be Mr. Herbert Spencer's ultimate.

But the conviction is slowly sinking down into people's minds that though we may use personality as the instrument by which we may apprehend God, we shall be doing Him grievous wrong if we take it as an exhaustive interpretation of His Being. That which is not seen and not known is greater than that which is revealed.

In some interesting lectures lately delivered before the University of Dublin, it was argued with much force, that God is to be regarded not only as Personal, but as Hyper-Personal, that is, as being Personal and something more. It is the something more which we seem to be tending more and more to lay stress on.

This leads to the further reflection, the full force of which we, no doubt, owe to the agnostic philosophy, *i.e.*, that God is, and must be, in a very true sense unknowable. Equals are only comprehended by equals, and he who would comprehend God must be His equal. The objection, for example, made to the Athanasian Creed is not

altogether lax or ignoble. On its finer side it is an instinctive shrinking from what seems to many to be an unduly coarse definition of what deeper knowledge has shown to be undefinable. Our best reflection about God is our silence, when we confess without confession that He is infinitely greater than we can conceive.

The new century, therefore, is likely to discard more and more of old-world definitions of the Being of God which would seem to limit Him in any way to the territories of human knowledge. After all, our relation to Him will always, so far as we can tell, have some affinity with our relations to one another. We know enough of our nearest and dearest for the purposes of life, but we know no more. In a superlative degree, the same is true of our knowledge of God. It may be expected then that this wave of thought will carry our children still further than it has brought us, and they will be content with such a conception of God, as is the product of a comprehensive vision of all His variegated manifestations, and will allow not only the possibility, but the certainty, that the half has not been told us.

The one practical conclusion from this thought of the profundity of God's Being will be drawn more and more clearly as time goes on. In proportion as Christianity becomes more conscious of the extent of its ignorance, the less inclined will Christians be to set up dogmatic tests and to revile one another for not fulfilling them. All creeds, even the deepest and the oldest, have, and must have, a large element

of the human, and, therefore, of the fallible in them. An increased sense of this fallibility will be an effectual barrier against religious hatred, divisions, and contempt, which will lead to the better day, when the lion and the lamb will feed together; when the Churchman and the Nonconformist, the Roman and the Protestant, will marvel at the party bitterness of the past; when Judah shall not vex Ephraim, and Ephraim shall not envy Judah.

Another direction in which we may expect a higher idea of God to be evolved, will be in the substitution of a purely ethical concept for one that is selfish. Many, too many, Christians lay a very great stress on the necessity of appeasing the wrath of God by a propitiatory offering. It is true that this offering no longer takes the form of the death of the first-born for the sin of the father's soul, or the slaying of some sacred animal, or even the offering of the fruits of the ground, or of one's most valued possession, but of what is conceived to be the one central offering, of which all these were blind and mutilated copies, namely the offering of the Son to the justice of the Father. It is quite true that the professed theologian knows how to interpret this offering so as to hide its direct line of continuity with savage rites, but it is also true that the average person, who sits at his feet, is incapable of seeing the successive stages by which the savage rite has been refined till it has emerged as a Christian doctrine of expiation. It ought not to be necessary to protest, at this time of day, that the whole conception of such a sacrifice is perfectly antagonistic to

the spiritual teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. He flatly opposed that lower conception which treated God as an angry Being Who needed to be appeased. In every possible way did He insist that God, instead of being that, was a Father longing to pour His love alike on the sinner and the saint. A just and all-holy God is part of man's conception of what God is. It is not the whole, nor is it the highest. The highest is that which we are slowly learning, even though its supreme manifestation has been before us for nineteen hundred years, and that is the truth enunciated in the tri-syllabic text, "God is Love." If He be Love, all He asks is the return of the prodigal son, even though he carry nothing in his hand. Love is the only homage, or reverence, which love requires.

Closely akin to this renewed sense of the tenderness of God, is the dumb feeling which delights to dwell on the beauty of Nature. It will be generally found that those who have no eyes for the glory of sea, and sky, and earth; who abhor poetry and romance generally; who hate the theatre, and condemn the innocent pleasures of life, lean to a view of God, which reflects their own harsh coldness. On the other hand, those who have the open mind and the childlike spirit; who feel no sin in enjoyment, but who believe, it may be all unconsciously, that joy has its discipline as well as pain, are also those who love to dwell on God as delighting to see His children happy. It requires very little knowledge of the Gospels to be able to decide which of these two is nearer to the mind of Jesus Christ.

One more point, and one more only need be specified. The age before ours emphasised the transcendence of God above His world. We, without denying this, have gradually come to place more reliance on His immanence. We find Him within, rather than without. We see Him not so much as the Maker of the flower in the crannied wall, but as its Life. We look for Him above all in the depths of our own being.

He is close to every one of us, and in Him we live and move, and have our being. A Christian pantheism is fast superseding a Christian deism, and one of the most important tasks which we shall bequeath to our children, as the twentieth century advances, is the synthesis of these two complementary but not contradictory truths.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN.

STRICTLY speaking, no doubt, this chapter ought to have come before the immediately preceding one, for what man thinks of God is determined, to a large extent, by what he thinks of himself. Indeed, it is not too much to say that nobody becomes a practical atheist until he has lost faith in man. The late Mr. Bradlaugh once said, and not necessarily in an irreverent spirit, that an honest God is the noblest work of man. And certainly we have abundant evidence that man is in the habit of making his gods in his own image, and in his own likeness. The question then which we have to deal with in this chapter is that which the Psalmist asked many centuries ago, when he exclaimed "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou soregardest him?" One possible answer is that of Tennyson's character, "We men are a little breed." The other is that of one of the noblest of all literary creations: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason; how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel; in apprehension how like a god!

The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!" Which of these two will the coming century adopt as its estimate of itself? There is much in our modern life to which the pessimist may appeal for the low view which he may elect to take. There is also much to which the optimist will cling as being bound up intimately with his ideal of perfected humanity.

It has been remarked that the intellectual burden which will be laid upon the shoulders of the next generation is that of forming a synthesis of the beliefs of this. We can see an example of this in the double tradition of man as individual and as social. Those who exalt the former of these two aspects have pointed out that man himself, especially in the realm of economics, is an end, and not a means. Those, on the other hand, who look at man in the mass, and not in detail, have very properly pointed out that man is not man without the stimulus and the restraint afforded by society. Are we bound to choose between these two, and to reject one of them? Or, will it be possible for a deeper philosophy to say when the choice is put before it that it will take both? There can be no doubt as to the answer. Writers like Mr. Muirhead have long ago abandoned that imperfect view of man as isolated. They draw their ethics not from an individual, abstracted from all relation to the mass of his fellows, but from the individual as a component part of a greater organism than himself. It is not the individual self, with its dreams and ideals of lofty virtue, which is taken

as the norm round which to construct a philosophic ethic. It is the social self of the individual which is adopted as the unit. But this very phrase of Mr. Muirhead's is, in itself, an epitome of philosophic synthesis, in which both the social and the individual side of man finds its true fulfilment.

It is almost superfluous to point out that this wider conception lies at the root of the increased interest taken in the social conditions under which men have to live, especially in our large cities. This interest is caused by the perception of the large part which the physical and social environment plays in the education of the individual. The temperance question; the housing problem; the ethics of commercial life; the marriage question, both on its economic and its sexual side, all resolve themselves, when analysed, into attempts, in various ways, and in varying degrees of wisdom, to correlate the individual and the society of which the individual forms a constituent part. Whatever of truth there may be in the biological law of the survival of the fittest is not likely to be lost sight of in the efforts of the social reformers to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land. Social questions, therefore, will both occupy a leading place in the religion of the new century, and will be also treated from a wider view point, and in a more generous spirit than the nineteenth century has been able to give to them.

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Some, in recent times, have said that he is a more clever animal than the rest, and that when that is

said, all is said. The possession of a thumb and of speech have enabled him luckily to get his own way on the earth, and to subdue his fellow animals, and make them serve his purposes. In short, man is a glorified monkey, limited in his essential being to the order of the Primates ; a cunningly contrived machine, in which the visible universe, and the visible universe alone, finds its crown and its summary. He is not a fallen god, but a promoted reptile. We may confidently affirm that the coming century will hear less and less of this estimate. When St. Paul landed at Melita, and a serpent out of the firewood hung on his arm, the simple islanders saw in it a plain proof that he was a criminal, on whose steps vengeance waited, even though he had been lucky enough to escape the winds and waves. But when they looked again, and saw no harm had happened to him, with equal simplicity they changed their minds and concluded that he was a god. We shall not err very far if we prophesy that a similar change will take place in man's estimate of man before the world is many decades older. Indeed, the coming danger will not be so much that man thinks too little of himself, as that he may exaggerate his undoubted majesty in such a way as to turn a just estimate into a conclusion born of overweening conceit.

In a sense, indeed, man may be said to be divine. The constant recurrence, as M. Landriot long since pointed out, of some form of Christian pantheism in the orthodox theology of the primitive and middle periods, is proof to those who have eyes to see that

man cannot escape from a consciousness of his lofty origin, even when most rigidly cramped by a narrow and inadequate philosophical system. The undying conflict within man himself, between the higher and the lower, is a further proof of this great truth. *Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor* was Seneca's setting of St. Paul's famous description of the eternal conflict between the spirit and the flesh: a conflict which makes the pathos, and oftentimes the tragedy of the lives of all of us. But what is its explanation? Is it merely that man as an animal is endowed with the customary appetites and instincts of an animal, and that the Divine has seen fit to interpose from without in his life; to dance before him like a will-o'-the-wisp; to disturb his rest; to kill his joy; to prevent him from enjoying the lower, without enabling him to live his life in the light of the higher?

"Oh, Thou, Who didst with pitfall and with gin

"Beset the path I was to wander in;

"Thou wilt not with predestined ill enmesh,

"And then impute my fall to sin."

Or, shall we adopt a view which has been urged upon us by earnest souls, who themselves have been illuminated by the torch of Eastern philosophy, and say that God, the Unmanifest, and as such, Unknown and Unknowable, has seen fit, for reasons of His wisdom, which are past finding out, to clothe Himself with form, so as to become the Manifest, and, therefore, the Known? Shall we go one step further and say that that in man which struggles

against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is the Divine Itself, and that man himself, therefore, is essentially divine, with the difference that his divinity has limited the scope of its action by the form which it has assumed? Shall we, in asserting this, be dogmatising about matters of which we understand next to nothing, and cannot understand much more? And in doing so shall we be blurring the all-essential line of distinction between subject and object; between the finite and the Infinite; between man and God? I do not know, and should certainly shrink from making any positive affirmation on a matter of such mysterious and awful import. But it does seem to me, as one who tries to understand the signs of the times, that the new century is likely to spend much of its strength in exploring that side of human nature where the Divine seems to manifest itself most clearly.

When our children come to do this, it is reasonably certain that they will follow the direction in which the finger-post of religious thought is already pointing. For long the crowning faculty of man has been thought to be his reason; a word which, perhaps, by its ambiguity has been responsible for more theological wrangling than any other word in the language. But, taking reason in its widest sense, to include what we commonly connote by thought, intelligence, knowledge, and even intuition, even then it will, it seems likely, be dethroned from its proud pedestal. Already indications are not wanting that it is the will and not the reason to

which men are looking for the supreme manifestation of the Divine in man. Nor is the reason for this change of view far to seek. Reason has been tried in the balances and found wanting. It should have united men, and it has divided them; it should have given man the mastery over nature, and in some form or other it has too often acted as a barrier to his triumphant progress; it should have given sweetness and light, and the sense of power, it has too often caused bitterness and strife, and the despair that is born of impotence. God, it was confidently thought, could be found by searching; the plummet of reason, if only it were long enough, could reach to Nature's depths; the eye of reason, if only it were purified, might well see beyond Heaven's heights. Such was the dream of the Encyclopædists. Such has been, with almost wearisome uniformity, the belief of far nobler men than they. Such is not the belief of to-day, nor will it be the creed of to-morrow.

Take a very simple example. Endless cobwebs have been spun by the devotees of reason about the relation of cause and effect. As the philosopher referred to by Locke said he knew what time was till he was asked, so everybody will be inclined to say he knows perfectly well the meaning of cause and effect till a bumptious reason interferes and confuses the issue while pretending to explain it. We have certainly been reduced to substitute such barren and useless alternatives as antecedent and consequent for the far simpler concept of cause and effect. Simpler, I mean, when these are looked at

with the eye of practical reason, and not subjected to the ingenuity of professors of logic. If the old order of reason first and will second be reversed, and an attempt made to understand cause and effect by the prime analogy of the human will, we shall get rid of much beating of the air, of much mental confusion, and of a great deal of logic chopping. Of course, in saying this I am not to be supposed to assume that will and intelligence are two faculties really distinct. I am only submitting to the necessity of all psychological discussion, and am treating distinct operations, for the time being, as logically distinguishable. What we are dealing with is a personality manifesting itself now as thought, now as will, now as emotion. All, then, that I am concerned with now is to point out that the new century will seek the explanation of this mysterious Universe, rather in the Will than in the Intelligence. It will dismiss Schopenhauer's "world as idea," and substitute for it the formula of "world as the product of will."

While on this topic, it may be as well to refer to a kindred subject, which will certainly attract a good deal of attention, perhaps in increasing degree, as the new century gets older. I refer to all those startling phenomena which go under the illusive name of occult. Such are the phenomena of dreams; of presentiments; of visions, such as ghosts, wraiths, and spirits generally; of telepathy; mesmerism; thought-reading; table-turning; trances, and all the weird occurrences which are connected with mediums and spirit experiences

generally. Time was when it was fashionable to dismiss all of these alike, with a contemptuous reference to imposture or delusion. They cannot be dealt with in this airy fashion any longer. Some of the most eminent men in the intellectual world, drawn from all professions, from almost every kind of scientific pursuit, have made it impossible to ignore the fact that strange things do happen which are not to be accounted for by any law at present known to science.

It is too early to say what will be found to be the final explanation of these phenomena. It is sufficient to say to-day that two respectable candidates only appear to claim the honours of their parentage. One is that which was baptized by M. Camille Flammarion, and Mr. Serjeant Cox after him, as "psychic force,"—a name, be it remarked, which merely declares to what it is related without telling us anything of its nature. The other is the hypothesis, known as spiritualism. As much may be said for this latter as against it, and as much against it as for it. Those who hold it hold to it grimly, and without any shadow of turning. Those who do not, withhold their assent not because they regard this hypothesis as absurd, but because they are not convinced that other hypotheses drawn from "this side" are inadequate. They give a respectful hearing to the spiritualists, but postpone their judgment.

The former explanation, which sees the origin of the phenomena referred to, in hitherto unsuspected powers in human nature itself, is certainly the one

which ought to be exhausted before its rival is preferred before it. If human nature in this visible world is capable of explaining what arises in the realm of the visible, it seems unscientific to fly to the invisible, and, therefore, to the less known, for light on a dark and intricate subject. I do not say that in time spiritualism will not justify itself as a valid explanation of occult phenomena. All that it is necessary to say to-day is that in either case, whether we accept the "psychic force" hypothesis, or the spiritualistic, we are extending the boundaries of science to cover powers and attributes of human nature which, up to the present, have not been covered by any scientific term at all. It is obvious that any prolonged attention given to these exhibitions of an abnormal human power, must immeasurably modify even the religious view of man, and therefore of God.

This leads to another important characteristic, which, in all probability, the twentieth century will show. Clearly it will be less and less inclined as time goes on to dogmatise about man, or the world he lives in, or the God in Whom he has his being. If for many thousands of years he has gone on in ignorance that he has a force within him which can move a table without touching it, or impress a kindred mind at the Antipodes, he will instinctively feel that dogmatic assertion in a world full of mystery is only another form of intellectual conceit. He will not reject creeds which are venerable by their antiquity, and by the service that they have rendered to religion, but he will be disinclined more

and more to use creeds as tests of moral goodness. In other words, he will treat the creed as a vague approximation to the general moral sense of the community, and as its protection against intrusion on the part of alien spiritual forces. Where a creed states an historical fact, of course, no difficulty is likely to arise, but if it should leave the realm of historical fact and deal with theological propositions it is pretty safe to say that the coming theologian will be reluctant to force assent to them. This will not be because he thinks theology a matter of slight importance, but because he will suspect, and rightly suspect, the capacity of human nature, even at its highest, for either comprehending the secrets of life and death, or, if it could comprehend them, for stating them in any intelligible language.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION.



CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION.

WHAT has been said in the previous chapter as to the new doctrine of man is of cardinal importance for the consideration of what is to be said in this as to the doctrine of revelation.

A new psychology is the inevitable precursor of a new view of revelation. Moreover, two facts come to lend an added importance to the subject. One is, that a tendency has for some years been at work in our midst to shift the weight of evidential proof of religion from history to psychology, and the other is the growing recognition by Biblical scholars of the importance of the psychological element in a just estimate of the meaning and value of the several books of the Bible. The present chapter will be devoted to a discussion of these two facts, and of some consequences which flow directly from them.

It is well known that Comte divided the stages of religious evolution into the Theological, the Metaphysical, and the Positive, according as the one or other attitude, suggested by the three terms, hap-

pened to predominate. Similarly, M. Auguste Sabatier has adopted a threefold division of the history of Revelation into the Mythological, the Dogmatic, and the Critical. To which he adds as a fourth the stage on which we are just entered, the Psychological. We have no intention of adopting this division as other than a convenient *memoria technica*, or heads of chapters to denote different ways in which the same man at different times, or different men at the same time, may, for specific purposes, envisage Revelation. Which of these methods commends itself most strongly to the Christian consciousness must depend on what we hold Revelation to import.

A popular distinction marks off into separate pens natural and revealed religion, thinking that honour is then done to the latter, even if the former is somewhat depreciated. A moment's consideration, however, suffices to show that the distinction is untenable. For, on the one hand, the truths of Christianity are not new. Among them is contained no single one which in some form, and in some degree, had not been familiar to men before. What was new was their setting in a unique Person; the winsomeness which they borrowed from the Personality of Him from Whom they radiated with unprecedented lustre; and not least the firm spiritual asceticism which passed by mere metaphysics as unessential to the religious life. On the other hand, natural religion is as fully entitled to the epithet 'revealed' as is the religion of the New Testament. It is from the same Author, and could never have

become natural, had it not first been revealed. This leads us to ask what Revelation means.

Now, it is evident that a person who refuses to admit any knowledge of a Revealer must logically deny that there can be such a thing as Revelation at all. On the other hand, a man who has resolutely faced the facts that knowledge has nothing to do except with past "co-existences and sequences," and has no power over the future, and little practical effect on the present; who has not been flouted by the jeers of scientific writers out of a trust in a yet higher faculty, which we call Faith; who recognises, that is, the need of acting and the dependence of acting on Faith, will have little difficulty in acting on the belief that a Revealer exists, and that, therefore, somewhat is revealed. All truth he will regard as having its source in this Revealer, and the unity which we have been led to see pervading all special truths will testify to him clearly of a supreme Revealer. So far, he will experience no difficulty. His troubles begin when he attempts to understand the methods by which the Revealer acts.

These troubles may be illustrated by some very positive statements made by the Principal of a Theological College some forty years ago: "The Bible," he said, "is God's word, in the same sense as if Hé had made use of no human agent, but had Himself spoken it."

And again: "The Bible cannot be less than verbally inspired. Every word, every syllable, every letter, is just what it would be, had God spoken from heaven without any human intervention."

And yet once more : "Every scientific statement is infallibly correct, all its history and narrations of every kind are without any inaccuracy."

In an age of doubts and agnostics such positiveness is as refreshing as that eagerness of belief of the Nonconformist minister the other day, who declared himself quite prepared to assert that Jonah swallowed the whale if only the Bible had happened to say so.

The difficulty that plain men of religion nowadays feel when confronted with such statements, is not due only to the many incidents contained in this Revelation of God which shock their moral sense or their passion for truth. It is not only Jonah's whale, or Balaam's ass, or Deborah's eulogy on Jael, or Saul's slaughter of the Amalekites, or David's harrows ; it is not the geology of Genesis, or the pragmatism of the priestly historians, or the failure of the Gospel writers to rise to the full height of their Master's teaching, which prevents them from going with the very positive divine, who has just been quoted. No, their difficulty lies much deeper, at the very root of our modern thought. It springs from our vastly increased knowledge of God, or rather from our deepened sense of the limitations of our knowledge about Him, and also from the impression which has now become so deeply engraven on our being, that God works, according to fixed order—or as St. Paul called it—according to the counsel of His Will. And what is more, this order extends backwards in time as well as all round us in space. If the ass spoke in Balaam's time he speaks nowa-

days on a similar urgency, and if he does not speak now he did not then. Similarly, it is felt, if we find at work in the human spirit of our day a tendency to deify the past, and to materialise what was once purely spiritual, we may safely conclude that the hard and dry theory of Revelation held by our positive divine sprang from the same evil tendency of human nature. "Protestants" make saints of the sixteenth century, and "Catholics" of the thirteenth. Both alike turn literature into science, faith into dogma, poetry into prose, and rhetoric into logic, and in that latter-day process you have the origin of what now seems to us an unworthy theory of Revelation, unworthy of the Revealer, of the subject and of the being to whom the word of truth comes.

Revelation then, to us to-day, has ceased to have to do with externals in any shape whatever, at any rate in the first instance. No dogma, no institution, no bare historical fact of itself is primarily the subject of Revelation. Whether Jericho's walls did or did not fall at the sound of Israel's trumpets may be matter of interesting historical speculation, but the incident comes under the head of history, or of objective fact, and as such it is excluded from the operation of the laws of Revelation. Not that Revelation has no bearing on history. Quite the contrary. The spirit of Isaiah was stirred within him at the wickedness and short-sighted folly of the princes of Israel, and Zion stood before him as the haven of safety for the people of God. That was God's revelation to him. But it was a revelation

given within, and became historical only as by prophetic utterance it gathered to it a little school of like-minded men, who endeavoured to press the Revelation they had received on the stiff-necked politicians of their day. The subject of Revelation is the individual, its sphere is his spirit, where spiritual truths are spiritually discerned. It takes an objective character only when it emerges from the spirit to impress itself on the lives and ways of men. Then it becomes a matter of history. And finally the test of its reality as a truth, that is, as a fact of revelation, is its capacity for repetition in the experience of the men who make its acquaintance in after times. Restricting ourselves as we do to the domain of religion we are bound to exclude from Revelation all cosmogonies, and all mere historical facts, for these are learned from the observation of creation and the study of the past. They may be of use in the proof or justification of religion: they are not a convenient motive-power setting religion a-going, nor do they belong to its inner activities. Consequently, they fail to answer to the test of capacity for reproduction in the life of the spirit.

We find then that Revelation, like Inspiration, must be restricted to spiritual facts, where religion is concerned. And being so restricted it is coextensive with religion itself. It is the cause of which religion is the effect; the inner side to religion; the concave surface to its inseparable convex. Hence Revelation, as we said in the beginning, is to be sought for in the psychological rather than in the

historical field. All truths which men come to see are Revelations. The righteousness which Amos thunders forth; the tenderness on which Hosea loves to dwell; the mingled mercy and truth of which so many Psalmists sing, were all Revelations to them, and become Revelations to us in our turn only as their burning words echo along the corridor of our souls, and call forth from our innermost chambers the dormant feelings which awoke to life in the holy men of old, who wrote for our admonition.

It may be not without use that we point to the twin subject of Inspiration by way of illustrating our main thesis. For, as a matter of fact, materialistic or quasi-materialistic views of Revelation and Inspiration are as inseparable as the Siamese twins, and live or die together. The man who believes that God revealed His truth by articulate words spoken into a human ear, will also believe in an Inspiration akin to that suggested by the picture in the National Gallery, where a Muse, in human form, is whispering her thoughts into the ready ear of a Court poet. So, too, when Revelation is seen to be of the Spirit within, Inspiration will be also held to be equipollent with the religion and spiritual insight which the writer brings to his task from the mysterious depths of consciousness, where the Divine and Human meet. To quote what I have said elsewhere about the Old Testament:—

“If it be true that the Jews were led gradually from lower views of religion to higher, a fact which is freely admitted on both sides, then the inspira-

"tion of the later periods will be more evident, and
"of a fuller character, than that of the former. This
"is but another way of saying that we are to look
"for the inspiration, not so much in the bare
"narration of the facts, as in the shaping of them,
"not so much in the earlier narrative as in the
"later revision, not so much in the subject-matter of
"the record as in the purpose of the redactor."

From this, it would seem that no valid distinction can be drawn between Inspiration and Illumination as some have tried to draw it. Or, at least, if the requirements of clear thought demand it, let us say that the distinction arises not from the method so much as from the subject-matter. The artist, with his Apolline serenity, sees with his mind's eye forms of beauty which he endeavours to express on canvas, or in stone, for the benefit of posterity, or for that very interesting spectator, himself. The poet, too, soliloquizes, as Mill said, and finds in the meanest flower that blows thoughts that do lie too deep for tears. A Shakespeare, or a Goethe, surveys with tranquil eye the problems of life, death, and the vast forever, and in their light interprets man to himself. Let us call the source of their power illumination, if you will. It does not, however, differ in nature from what, by common consent, is called Inspiration. Where the two differ is that one expresses itself in terms of art, and the other of religion. Roughly speaking, the Old Testament Jew showed little sense of art and little care for theology. But he had a profound instinct for religion, and the Divine Power which energised in him, and first fitted him

to experience and then to record his visions, we call Inspiration.

The recognition of the entirely orderly nature of Inspiration will enable us to treat its products with more reverence than ever before. For it is obvious that if Inspiration be one of the forces of Nature at work in human history, it is a grossly irreverent mode of procedure to limit the sphere of its action to a particular time and place on *a priori* grounds. If we do not feel this, at all events the Early Christians did. It was long ere they made up their mind to accept certain books as Inspired, and to reject others as non-inspired. Whether their final decision was irrevocable is a question which must depend on our estimate of their powers of criticism in matters of religion, and this estimate of ours again will depend in its turn on a number of historical and of philosophical considerations which can only be faintly alluded to here. .

And this brings us finally to a point which is of cardinal importance to the proper understanding alike of Revelation and Inspiration. Nothing is to be considered as the proper subject-matter, whether of Revelation or Inspiration, which is not capable of reproduction in the religious experience of men to all time. From the point of view of religion all dogmatic systems such as that of St. Thomas Aquinas, or Martin Luther, all ceremonial such as that said to be spread over ten thousand volumes in the library of the Vatican, all historical views, all symbolics, are but the work of a *chimæra bombynans in vacuo*, if they cannot find an echo in

the heart of the believer. Nay, as we have been reminded, in vain was Christ born in Bethlehem if He is not born again for us in our own hearts. The Incarnation is not a historical fact on which to build a philosophy of the cosmos. The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ may suggest an Atonement to the man who is in search of an intellectual solution to the problem of evil. The Resurrection may dignify the brow of him who loves to think of himself as a dis-crowned king. But till the Birth of Christ, the Death of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ have their counterparts in the life of His follower, and are reproduced in his experience, they have not become religious facts. Indeed, it may be questioned whether they can ever be even intelligible facts to anybody till he has approached them from the religious side—has died unto sin, been born again unto righteousness, and risen into the new life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Similarly, Inspiration and Revelation can be appreciated aright by that man only who has first heard something of the Word of God within, and delivered it, however feebly, to his brother. To him the prophetic word will come with power because it springs to new life in his own being, calls up feelings hitherto dormant, wakes an answering echo, and so lives again in his own personal experience.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE.

“**I** VIEW the New Testament theology as the source destined to rejuvenate our traditional Church and doctrinal systems, concerning the insufficiency of which our age, with all its other differences, is pretty unanimous.” This dictum of Beyschlag’s marks the vastness of the change which has come over our conceptions of the place of the Bible in the domain of theology. Indeed, it is not too much to say that a silent revolution has taken place since the days when the personality of the Devil formed the ground for the famous ecclesiastical suit of *Jenkins v. Cook*, or when Bishop Colenso was put out of the synagogue for a premature championship of the newer critical light, or the famous “*Essays and Reviews*” stirred Convocation Hall to the depths. We feel that there is more in common between those days and the year 1642, when a learned divine asserted that the titles of the Psalms were as truly inspired as the Psalms themselves, than there is between us of the twentieth century and our fathers of fifty years ago.

Before we pass to a consideration of what this great change involves, it may be well to point out

what we have lost. The imagination which always conceals from us the past by clothing it with a light which never was on sea or land, is apt to dwell on the superior certainty of Revelation which our fathers enjoyed, and which we, like petulant and prodigal children, have heedlessly squandered. When every word of the Bible was minted in Heaven, and assigned a value from the Eternal King, men felt that they had a sure criterion of truth in the midst of the clash of opinion and the mist of ignorance. The world might be a quicksand, but the Word of God was a great rock where the footsteps need not slide. Any difficulty which might arise was due to human fallibility, and was a mere matter of interpretation of the Word which abideth for ever.

This theory had a simplicity and a cogency about it, so long as it was not examined too closely, which naturally recommended it to a generation predisposed to belief without criticism, and trust without caution. It might last until it was seriously challenged, and might and did satisfy the needs of the soul so long as no doubt existed as to its agreement with facts. When the reason of man awoke to a full sense of its own powers, and when it discovered that at last it was in possession of materials for a thoroughgoing criticism, the older theory of inspiration fell almost without a struggle. Its defenders made a few martyrs, but those they slew gave courage to others to take up their work. The conquered, as they have done so often in history, captured their conquerors.

Thus it is that to-day we have to deal with a Bible in ruins, as it were, and a theology which is in a chaotic because a transition period. The work of destruction, necessary and valuable as it was, was still but the prelude to the still more wholesome work of construction. And the records of the past tell us with sufficient distinctness that the work of building up a system of thought must begin by a critical reduction of the existing materials to first principles. We have a mass of rubbish in popular and traditional views about the nature of the Bible, which is blocking up the highway of our God, and preventing the triumphant march of His Truth. But scattered up and down amid these heaps are pearls of great price, eternal facts, spiritual principles, historical examples, which call upon us to sort them out, and reset them in the renovated Palace of Truth. This critical reduction to first principles is more especially required where the Bible is concerned.

In the first place we have to face the fact that the Bible is a collection of books, which in their origin had little or no connection with each other, however they may have been edited, and adapted by later hands to a ruling conception. It is true that even sticklers for the older orthodoxy recognised to some extent this diversity of Biblical literature. But they were prevented from giving it due importance by their presuppositions. They started with the assumption that when once the characteristic differences of the various books had been detected it was merely necessary to fit them into the scheme of

Revelation as commonly understood. It was forgotten that the real question was as to what the content of Revelation actually was, and that this must be determined by a patient and searching analysis of the various documents in which this Revelation professed to be contained. It might be all very well to say, as indeed was said, that the richness of the Gospel was but enhanced by the varied ways in which its first spokesmen embodied it, but the further question was shirked, or perhaps rejected as impious, which of these various ways was nearest to the reality? It seems to have been felt, and indeed may still be felt, that to pull the records to pièces so as to appraise better their contribution to our knowledge of our Lord was, to use a homely image, to kill the goose which laid the golden eggs. Knowledge might be more accurate and thorough, but was there not more than a danger of faith being evaporated in the process?

Well, the answer to this, as to all *a priori* reasoning, is best given by pointing to facts. So far from the Bible being less of an authority to-day, or its word being less quick and powerful, it is more read than ever, and its message more deeply because more intelligently listened to than ever before. The testimony of all preachers of all persuasions is direct and unanimous on this head. Criticism has not destroyed for them or their hearers the spiritual power of the Gospel-Message. It has but translated the Bible into language that the twentieth century can understand; it has disengaged its living words from many an unwarrantable prejudice which

blocked the road to the heart of the hearer. It has not touched the testimony—the Biblical testimony—to the redeeming power of Jesus Christ.

The first change we notice then which affects the Bible is that which comes from the recognition of the fact that each book in it has a standpoint as well as a subject. To ascertain this standpoint is very often a difficult and delicate task, demanding patience, spiritual insight, impartial judgment, and a large and generous knowledge. In the process many mistakes may be made, and much criticism have to be undergone. Archæologists may rise in their wrath—not always wisely; Beyschlag may reject the conclusions of Weiss; Reuss, of Holtzmann; Weizäcker, of Lightfoot, and meanwhile the thoughtless may include them all and their works in one sweeping condemnation, forgetting that progress is ever through conflict. The judicious will however wait, knowing that motion is a sign of life, and that while there is life there is hope, nay the certainty, of truth being vindicated.

One characteristic, however, of the critical process must be carefully noticed. In a previous chapter we had occasion to remark on the penetrating activity of the principle of evolution, and on its critical significance for modern thought. It would have been surprising, therefore, if the composition of the Bible had escaped its all-pervasive influence. As a matter of fact all histories of Revelation which have made any mark in recent years have been constructed on the more or less avowed principle that they fit into an evolutionary framework. Their

authors, therefore, starting from this postulate, have been busied with attempts to formulate a story in which the facts supplied by their sources shall find their true place as the links in a long chain of cause and effect, of antecedent and consequent, which is known by the name of evolution. The thoroughness with which this principle of evolution has been accepted is demonstrated by the simple fact that while critics very often show little mercy to their colleagues when they offer an account of *what* history is, they never question their method, their presumption that the *how* of history is given by the principle of evolution.

It is true that Professor Sayce has in faltering tones suggested that the Bible is a Book of Oriental Religion, and that the nature of evolution is differently conceived in East and West. His object appears to be to cut the ground from under the feet of the critics in the interests of what is supposed to be orthodoxy and is really obscurantism. But his objection is of no weight. If it proves anything it proves too much, for if this Oriental Religion of the Bible is so alien to all our deepest modes of thought then the Aryan races of Europe had better give up their age-long attempt to understand it, and go back to their native Sun and Sky worship.

But the Western Professor's *ipse dixit* may be met squarely with the plain contradiction of a Professor from the East itself. This is what an Indian, Professor Velinker says on this very point:—"The East will be East, and the West will be West, we are assured, and the two can never meet. Let us

not be misled by such talk. The East will be East undoubtedly; we shall retain many of our Oriental traits to the end; but *truth* is not different for the East and for the West, and our endeavour should be to seek and propagate *truth*."

But a still more fatal difficulty which meets the objection of Professor Sayce is that the difference he insists on has nothing to do with the question. Whatever truth there may or may not be in the Oriental's view of evolution does not concern us here. The question is whether the Bible, as the record of certain historical events, discloses in them a continuum, a purpose, a series of causes and effects. The critics affirm that it does, and they have stated their reasons with almost bewildering fulness, and with such cogency that probably nine out of every ten educated men have accepted their conclusions. As the Oriental's view of evolution does not touch the character of the facts before us, so neither does it affect the validity of the conclusions drawn strictly from those facts.

We may affirm, therefore, with some confidence, that until the principle of evolution is subsumed in some yet deeper principle of God's working, the evolutionary view of the Bible will hold the field. It certainly holds it in the opening year of the twentieth century as against the arbitrary character assigned to the Bible in previous years. And, of course, this principle must be held as being as applicable to the New Testament as to the Old. It may be impossible yet to assert that the precise dates of all the New Testament Books or their authors are

finally established. Some may hold the Epistle of James, for example, to be pre-Pauline, or may recognise in it a writing of the period of compromise; opinions may differ as to whether Barnabas or Apollo, or some other person known only to God, wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; whether II. Thessalonians be really from the hand of Paul, or the Fourth Gospel be written by the beloved disciple, or contain memoirs of his, or be a second century unhistorical document. These are minor matters on which fuller criticism, and perhaps the discovery of long-lost documents may shed new light. But what we may assume as beyond controversy is the implied conviction of all critics that growth and development do show themselves in the Apostolic Age; that Peter when he wrote his Epistle (if he did write it), was a wiser and more mellow spirit than when he deprecated the sufferings of Christ; that Paul when he penned I. Corinthians xv. held far more matured views about the resurrection body than when he wrote I. Thessalonians; that the love of the Fourth Gospel and the Epistle of St. John is far more in accordance with the Synoptic presentment of Jesus than the vengeance and wrath which frown upon us through the thunder-clouds of the Apocalypse.

It is not necessary, of course, to suppose that because one concept which emerges in the history is higher than another, therefore, it must be later and an outgrowth from the other. Ideas may be synchronous as well as logically consequent. The play of thought in the Apostolic Church was too

lively and free to follow any mechanical order. All that is contended for is that indications are not wanting that on the one hand the same individual shows signs of spiritual and intellectual growth, and that on the other hand the Christian community, as a whole, as it is represented in the pages of the New Testament, advanced from the more simple to the more complex, grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and exhibited every token of obedience to what in its widest sense is known as the law of evolution.

It is the fashion nowadays to sneer at the critical work of Baur, and to sing an *Io Pæan* over the death of his peculiar theory of a Pauline and Petrine antagonism, and there is no doubt that he put more on his theory than it could bear. But this was after all but a particular application of his larger Hegelian theory that advance is by way of thesis and antithesis, to which succeeds a higher unity. The antagonism of priest and prophet in the Old Testament, for example, ended in the destruction of neither, but in that higher unity foreshadowed by the 51st Psalm. "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit" is the higher unity in which the thesis of the older priesthood and the antithesis of the newer prophecy found their fulfilment and harmony. So in the New Testament the obligatoriness of the Mosaic Law encounters the Pauline freedom from all law as its antithesis, and emerges finally in the "royal law of liberty," where Paul and "they that were of James" meet in loving agreement.

May it not well be that we in this twentieth

century are witnessing a process of the same character? Luther and the Reformers generally took over from the Mediæval Church a mechanical view of Inspiration. This was the thesis which the Reformed Churches set up in the two centuries which immediately followed the great revolt of the Christian conscience. The Deistic controversies of the eighteenth and the iconoclastic of the nineteenth, in which the current view of Inspiration had such short shrift, supplied the necessary antithesis. To-day we are approaching the Beulah of the higher unity. Our Bible, as we now understand it, satisfies our spiritual longings for a salvation from God, as it has always done, while at the same time it inflicts no outrage on our understanding. Protestantism, following Mediævalism too slavishly, made it a yoke too heavy for our fathers to bear. They threw off the yoke, and to us now it is in very truth a law of liberty, a lantern to our feet, and a light unto our paths.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

THAT "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," is a truth with which the very existence of Christianity is bound up. For it is, as the Gnostic schools found to their cost, a Gospel rather than a Philosophy, and whenever its leaders have reversed this order they have led their foolish followers to disaster. It is not, however, always admitted that St. Paul's words may be interpreted with much philosophic latitude, according as we approach them from one direction or another. Perhaps the least living mode of approach is that of an unthinking acceptance of traditional dogma, and the most fruitful that which endeavours to reconstruct the Apostle's own experience, and that of the first generation of Christians.

According to the former mode the "loyal Churchman" believes that the theological doctrine of the Two Natures is not only true, but exhaustively true and finally true. He fails to distinguish very often between the essential reality which lies in the affirmation "Jesus Christ is very God and very Man," and the varying shades of meaning which may be put, and indeed at different stages of Christian

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history must be put on the terms "God" and "Man." The child and the philosopher may each repeat the confession, "Jesus Christ is very God and very Man," and yet the ideas which the words summon into consciousness may be as wide as the poles asunder. That in a nutshell sums up the theological position of the doctrine of the Incarnation to-day. It is held as true all round the Church, but different Churches or different congregations of Churchmen do not interpret it in the same way.

There may be said to be three main groups of opinion in this matter, the Traditional, the Kenotic, and the Volitional. The first holds rigidly to the doctrine of Two Natures brought into union in a way beyond all understanding, and treats it as rationalistic presumption to dwell on the intellectual difficulties of the doctrine. The Church of all ages has thought and taught so, and he who wants to form an intelligent conception of its tradition must be kindly but firmly pointed to the ecclesiastical danger-board with its "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

Let it be at once conceded that to the simple Christian to whom theological speculation has no attractions, and no dangers, this attitude of simple acceptance of a venerable formula is necessary and right. His religious instinct seizes the kernel of truth, and his mind is too inactive to confuse with the kernel any misleading or faulty ideas which the setting might suggest to others who are less unsophisticated. If indeed all of us were as innocent of theological prepossessions as our simple cottagers,

then all writing on the Theology of the Incarnation would be but love's labour lost. As it is, there are many who believe in the Godhead of Jesus Christ, but find the formula of the Two Natures a stumbling block, an inadequate statement of their deepest beliefs, and a crude if not false rendering into prose of the heavenly teaching of the New Testament. These souls surely deserve some consideration at our hands, even if they are to be relegated to a lower spiritual plane than that occupied by the people of simple, unquestioning piety.

Two gratuitous obstacles may first be removed from their path. It is false theology, to say nothing of bad tactics, to stake the truth of the Incarnation on the Virgin-Birth. That St. Matthew's Gospel teaches the latter is undoubted, but suppose that some day it should be demonstrated that the circles from which St. Matthew's Gospel sprang were mistaken in their belief on this head, should we then have no option but to throw up our hands and surrender our Christianity at discretion? Would the humiliating confession have to be made that the hundreds of thousands who had worshipped Jesus as their God had been under a hideous delusion, and self-deceived about the peace which they had fancied they had found? Surely not; we should have to revise our theories about the mode in which the Incarnation took place, but should be under no necessity of surrendering our belief in the Incarnation itself.

It may be objected to this that it is waste of time to ask what we are to do in a contingency which can

never arise, for the Virgin-Birth is a truth which can never be demonstrated false. We rejoin: But the contingency is here to-day, and has crystallised into a fact so far as great numbers of good Christians are concerned. They believe, rightly, or wrongly, that the doctrine of the Virgin-Birth is impossible of credence; the question before us, therefore, is whether the Church is to reject them as heretics by treating belief in the Virgin-Birth as inseparable from belief in the Incarnation, or to insist on the belief only that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," leaving her members free to hold this or that conception of the *how* "God was in Christ."

The second object which should be cleared out of the way as a gratuitous difficulty is the often stated and widely held belief that the fourth century was specially gifted to enable it to deal with questions of Christology, gifted, that is, in such a unique way that its conclusions are final, and to be challenged by none but impious and unbelieving men. Or, if this belief be thought somewhat too naïve, then recourse is had to a less crude form of it, viz., that which says that what has commended itself to fifteen subsequent centuries has withstood the test of time and carries in its front, therefore, the practical proof of its truth. • *Vox populi vox Dei*.

The answer to this is two-fold. (1) The unanimity is by no means so complete as the objector would have us believe. (2) The great majority of believers between A.D. 325 and 1901 have been incapable of understanding the theo-

logical niceties of the doctrine of the Two Natures, and cannot, therefore, with any fairness, be called as witnesses. To which we may add (3), that many of those who are responsible for the continued existence of ancient formulæ have not always been animated by a sincere love of truth or of souls. Witness the Councils of Constance, Trent, and the Vatican out of many others.

We conclude, therefore, that each age has the right and duty to examine afresh the records which come down to it, to accept them after probation, to revise them when they are faulty, and to reject their authority when they contain what is false. The Holy Spirit is with the Church to-day as truly as when Arius troubled the peace of the fourth century.

To return then to our main subject. That the formula of the Two Natures does not satisfy even the orthodox to-day is a disquieting fact, but a fact none the less. It is not always easy to say what is the cause of their difficulty. It is not that they are disinclined to accept the mysterious, or are determined to set bounds of reason to the working of the Divine. They are perfectly ready to bow before the Unknowable, and to leave it the last word. But they are too honest to allow that the Unknowable when It comes into contact with known humanity can issue in contradictions and anomia. They find themselves unable to believe that the same Person can be the subject at once of infinite and finite knowledge, of infinite and finite power. And, therefore, they are having recourse to some form of Kenotic theory, by which they hope that the

contradiction may be removed, and the way left open for the admission of the traditional dogma of the Two Natures.

The advocates of a compromise, the builders of a half-way house, must always command our sympathy. They are very properly sensible of the past, and are at the same time aware that the present has moved away somewhat from the old landmarks. It would be unjust to say of them that, like the Alban King torn to pieces by horses by order of Tullus Hostilius, they have withdrawn their forces to a safe position on a hill to watch how the battle goes that they may in the end join the victor. But their fate, it is to be feared, will be that of Fuffetius. Unable to rest in the "garden enclosed" of conservatism, or to expatiate at ease under the blue sky of truth, they earn the impartial distrust of "orthodox" and "liberals," and exercise for the most part less influence than they might justly look to exercise on the onward movement of humanity.

A powerful factor in solving the more rigid form which the doctrine of the Two Natures has assumed is to be traced in the more scientific study of the language and the background of the New Testament writings. It is true that an irritable reluctance is frequently shown at any attempt to comment on the Bible as one would on a Greek or Latin classic, free from all doctrinal prepossessions, and concerned only to bring out what the book was meant to say to those for whom it was written. But none the less this method is being more and more adopted. We shall see no more commentaries like Christopher

Wordsworth's. A writer like St. Paul, for example, is nowadays interpreted by considerations drawn from his own spiritual experiences, from his early training, from the religious conceptions held among Jewish Rabbis, from the language of the Papyri and of the Greek-speaking world in general. The method of arguing which starts from the existence of certain *data* to-day, such as the threefold ministry, or beliefs about the Real Presence, and then works backward to their sources and bids us judge whether the accounts given of the two harmonize is falling into well deserved discredit. The first duty of a commentator, or other investigator, is to reconstruct the period which he is studying; and unless he can do this with some success his work is rendered useless.

The best writers on New Testament theology to-day recognise the necessity laid on them of explaining their sources by historical researches, including in their tools such organa as philology, contemporary history, comparative religion, psychology, and such principles as may be regarded as established by a comprehensive study of the course of human development. It is necessary to lay stress on the method of research now generally authoritative, for unless this is borne in mind the conclusions of our scholars may wear an air of careless contempt for established beliefs and traditional habits of thought.

One or two examples may suffice to illustrate this point. The formula "Jesus Christ is very God and very Man" depends for its meaning on what we

understand by "God" and "Man." Now it is undoubtedly the case that the prevalent conception of God which we find around us to-day is that of a Being Who is Immanent in His World, and especially in man himself. St. Paul's doctrine of the human pneuma being filled by the Divine Pneuma and so set free from the bondage of the flesh, is one which appeals with peculiar force to us moderns. God is in all men as the Giver of their light and life; why not then in a more peculiar sense in Christians? In a sense, though not the highest, all men may be called the sons of God. In a still higher sense, though God be the Father of all men, they *become* His sons only when they begin to grow into His likeness ethically. In the highest sense of all Jesus Christ was the Son of God because His likeness to the Father was complete. His will was in perfect tune with the will of God, and that fact alone would constitute Him Son of God in a unique sense.

But this ethical basis of sonship, though real, and true so far as it goes, is not the last word on the subject. An ethical likeness rests, we feel, on a real community of nature. What issues in like results springs from a like root. If we are like God then we have a *natural* affinity with Him. He is our Father, and that in no figurative sense. This conviction which we seem to have attained by some process too subtle for reason to explain thoroughly lies at the root of the modern mode of regarding the Incarnation. At the heart of man's spirit, it is felt, is a spark of the Divine, imprisoned too often,

overlaid with selfish desires and habits, but, nevertheless, a fire in the embers still, waiting only to be fanned into flame. As William Law put it: "Man has a spark of the Light and Spirit of God as a supernatural gift of God given with the birth of his soul to bring forth by degrees a new birth of that life which was lost in Paradise." On the other hand, the "love or desire of God toward the soul of man is so great that He gave His only-begotten Son, the brightness of His glory, to take the human nature upon Him, that by this mysterious union of God and Man, all the enemies of the soul of Man might be overcome . . . The Gospel is the history of the love of God to Man."

In other words, every child of man is an imperfect Incarnation of the Divine, a being possessing the Holy Spirit in some degree. Jesus was God giving Himself without stint to the world, using a perfect human instrument as the vehicle of His self-revelation, shewing all of Himself that can be shown to beings such as we are. God gave not His Spirit by measure unto Jesus Christ, and, therefore, he who has seen Him has seen the Father.

The real fact is that nowhere is our departure from Apostolic thought more apparent than in our treatment of the metaphysic of the Being of our Lord. The New Testament writers knew Jesus to be sinless and inferred from this experience His Divinity. We postulate His Divinity and infer His sinlessness. The result may be the same, but the Apostolic Age was on surer ground than we. We expose our position to attack from a thousand

sides. They left but one side open, that of their own experience, and that their lives made it difficult • for their adversaries to call in question. It is certainly worth our consideration whether we ought not to carry our appeal to the Primitive Church a little further than we do, and include in it the question of Christology which occupies so large a space in modern treatises of theology. If we took as our point of departure the sinlessness of Jesus we should be not only on Primitive ground, but also more truly in line with the many evidences that Christ came to give a Gospel and not a Philosophy. The suspicion must always be present that the formula of the Two Natures is due as to its form to the ruling ideas of Greek philosophy of the fourth century, and is not capable of verification; while no such suspicion attaches to the Apostles' testimony of the sinlessness of Jesus, and what is more their testimony on this point is capable of verification, and has been verified in the many thousands of souls who have surrendered their lives to His guidance, and have found that as they grow in holiness so have they grown in knowledge that the Captain of Faith was immeasurably ahead of them.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the real problem for faith to-day is not whether the formula of the Two Natures is adequate and final. It is mainly historical and not theological. And it is this. The first disciples knew Jesus in His sinless Life. Reflection on His sublime Personality caused them to make two identifications. They identified Him first with the Jewish Messiah and next with

the cosmic Memra, Logos, or Word of God, the archetypal origin of all created things, the glory of the Father, the projection as it were of the Divine Thought. And the real question is: Were they justified by fact in making this identification? Has the general Christian consciousness from their day to this found through its own experience that the Mind and Will of God have been truly revealed to it in a practical way by Jesus Christ, so that the predicate of Divinity in the same practical way may be properly applied to Him? Has it had reason too for seeing that in Him were summed up all the best anticipations of the Jews, especially those attached to the Servant of Jehovah, so that the Messianic ideal also was realised in Him? The answer to both these questions must, as the present writer thinks, be frankly in the affirmative. In any case it may be safely said that the twentieth century is likely to form for itself a Christology on religious lines rather than on metaphysical. If it be asked whether God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself it will point for proof to the men and women who through Christ have been reconciled to God, and then enquire whether any further proof is necessary or indeed possible.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

IN the days of Theodore Parker a kind of ecclesiastical fashion came in which sent its devotees into declarations that sin was not a reality but a figment of priests and theologians, and that with its disappearance there went all need for an Atonement, with the consequent nullification of thousands of volumes which had treated of its doctrine. As a counterblast against the repellent teaching of Jonathan Edwards perhaps even this denial of a plain fact was not without its uses. For it paved the way to a higher synthesis in which righteousness and peace should meet without quarrelling, and mercy rejoice against judgment.

In no department perhaps of theology is its dependence on the current philosophy of the day more apparent than in that which has for its subject matter Sin and its correlative the Atonement. When the dominant religious note was struck by a social order of which an imperial or ecclesiastical despot was the head, sin was naturally regarded as of the same category as a crime. For graver crimes torture and death were the appointed penalties; for lesser, fine or imprisonment. So, too, venial sins

were to be atoned for by penance, while the torments of hell and eternal death awaited the sinner whom the Church committed unto Satan by excommunication. In days too when the imagination of a half-pagan Christendom peopled the world with spirits of evil, under the supreme control of one principal Devil, the escape from sin was thought to be accomplished by this all-powerful spirit being tricked out of his prey. So too at a higher stage of development it was thought that sin was a crime against a "non-natural, magnified Man," and was, therefore, as He was, infinite in its character, needing an infinite make-weight. Thus a commercial or legal estimate of sin led to a false dichotomy which ranged the Son against the Father, and set up balances in which the mercy of God was duly weighed against His justice.

Each of these theories fitted to the general temper of the age which produced it, and perished when its atmosphere was changed. It served its purpose, and kept alive in the hearts of men the sense of separation between man and God, and maintained an age-long protest against all attempts to whittle down the gravity of sin as a fact of spiritual experience. Nowadays another temper prevails, which is, no doubt, destined like its predecessors to give way some time or other to a newer outlook when its work is done. It cannot be denied that the concept of evolution has tended to make man regard himself as less a sinner than an invalid, a pilgrim of hope rather than a shipwrecked vessel on the waters of life. With this changed view has

come a depreciation of the gravity of sin as a spiritual fact. Heredity, it is thought, accounts for much, environment for more, and the pair between them account for all. Why blame the morose and sour-tempered man, the profligate, the drunkard, the weak-willed man, void of nerve and backbone, the tramp, the club-loafer, the ne'er-do-well? They are the victims of cosmic forces working from generation to generation, objects of pity, not of blame, passive sufferers and not active subjects. Evil is but good in the making, a stage, full of sadness and sorrow, no doubt, in the long and toilsome progress of the race, but not a discrete thing, capable of being differentiated into physical suffering and moral wrong. We all suffer in some form, and whenever the echo of old beliefs about sin reaches the ears of the wrong-doer he is apt to console himself with the reflection that to know all is to pardon all.

No competent observer of the present age will question the general accuracy of this description, however much he may lament the gulf which he thinks he detects between our thought about sin and its reality. But it is questionable whether the present judgment about sin can be regarded as final, and that for the simple reason that it is difficult to make it square with the ascertained facts of the spiritual life. The experience of the saints on this point is express. The testimony of the awakened sinner tells the same tale. Both affirm that they *know* that sin has an element which is not simply imperfection, not only a painful sense of failure to

reach a potential good. No theory of the universe avails to explain away the sense of guilt which arises within ; nor are they at all convinced that conscience is the product of the accumulated fears of an unknown series of ancestors, or its verdicts a mere survival of savage modes of thought. Polished and cultured minds agree here with the naïve and unsophisticated in declaring that the categorical imperative is explicable by no hedonistic casuistry.

While we hold it certain that the principle of evolution will leave a deep mark on the future theology of sin, we yet are convinced equally that it will not be the sole factor in determining its outlines. The unbroken and uniform testimony of the spirit must be allowed its say also. In other words, sin will be seen to be sin, *deserving* suffering and not simply dragging suffering in its train. As the intuitionist school of ethics is never tired of pointing out, our coming theologians will insist even more strenuously than ever, that man has free-will, and is not an automaton deluding itself that it has the power of choice when it has not ; will insist too that innate in man is the sublime power of seeing Eternal Goodness, loving it, desiring it, and determining to live for it. The thousand marks of evolution around will not be ignored, still less resisted, by our theologians, nor will evolution as a method of God's working be held inapplicable to the doings of the spirit. But it will be affirmed, and that not uncertainly, that there is at least one real thing known to us which is not explained by the law of evolution, and that is spirit itself.

The reason for this exclusion of spirit from the domain of evolution is not perhaps far to seek. Evolution describes how things *become*, it does not touch that which *IS*. But the spirit of man is akin to the Eternal Spirit, with Whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning, no change and no decay. The philosophic distinction between what is and what seems to be, between spirit and form, is too universal and too persistent for us to believe that it is built on a quicksand. On this assumption—an assumption which religion is justified in treating as a postulate—evolution is powerless to subject the unchanging spirit to its sway. The Self within the Self which judges, praises, and blames is superior to the “wheel of nature,” and it is from it that there proceed the sense of guilt and the consciousness of sin. To use Pauline phraseology, it is the Divine Pneuma within which unveils its beauties to the human pneuma, and strives to persuade its earthly counterpart to lend an ear to its entreaties. The rejection of its appeal is the cause of the sense of sin. All that evolution can do is to trace the paths by which this human pneuma has slowly and painfully laboured upward to self-consciousness. When it has mapped out these its work is done.

Sin then separates man from God, and the two must be made once more at one—that is, an At-one-ment must take place. Does this mean that God must be reconciled to man or man to God, or both at once? The answer to the question illustrates the familiar fact that it often takes much learning

to make us miss the truth. The Christian consciousness, when set free from the perverse bias of theological prepossessions, answers confidently that God remains the same, and that it is man who needs to be changed.

And with this agrees the teaching of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. He declares explicitly that the Father "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And one of His Apostles asserts that "God hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ," and entreats us to recognise his ambassadorial office and suffer ourselves to "be reconciled to God." The conception of God as a wrathful Being needing to be propitiated belongs not to Biblical theology, but to sub-Christian religion, a survival long drawn out of the childish days when fear was stronger than love, when the spirit of the slave had not been cast out in favour of the free spirit of the loving and trusting son. This same conception lay as a nightmare on the soul of mediæval Christianity, and is still unhappily powerful in circles where Mary is called in to show that mercy which the Son as Judge cannot give, even as in another setting of the same slavish spirit the Son's sacrifice is put between the sinner and the avenging wrath of the Father.

It may not be amiss to point out here that this same contradiction of ideals finds expression in the controversy whether the Eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. The root of the belief that it is, is to be found in the lower view

of the Atonement just described, viz., that which holds that the Father needs to be reconciled rather than man. The higher view that God remains the loving Father of all, whether just or unjust, (though it is true that men *become* His sons by a moral growth into His likeness), is what animates those who hold that the Eucharist is not propitiatory, but an act of praise and thanksgiving for reconciliation already effected. It is useless to expect any settlement of this long dispute until the champions on the one side and the other have made up their minds to fight their battle on the question whether the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ is to be understood as a reconciliation of God to man, or a reconciliation of man to God. And, of course, such a dispute can be ended only by a return to that New Testament theology from which we have departed to our grievous loss.

Fortunately, when it is agreed to abide by its decision no doubt can be entertained by any reasonable person as to the nature of its award.

It may be said, of course, that many references are made by New Testament writers to propitiation, and it is inferred from them that this implies a Person needing to be propitiated. Two leading passages may be referred to. (1) "Whom God of old designed as a propitiation to be accepted by faith, a propitiation consisting in the shedding of His blood, ordained to make known God's righteousness for the remitting of past sins through His forbearance, that thereby His righteousness should be made known in the present age; the

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import being that God is righteous and does impart righteousness to everyone who is actuated by faith in Jesus." (Rom. iii., 25, 26. Dr. Rutherford's translation). (2) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I. John iv., 10).

As to the former of these passages we may reject with perfect confidence the old interpretation of it which had reference to the Mercy Seat and the blood of sprinkling, and that for three reasons:— (i.) This explanation is out of keeping with St. Paul's mode of thought in every other reference to the Atonement. (ii.) The addition of "through faith" to "propitiation" at once removes the whole reference from the transactional or substitutional to the ethical plane; and (iii.) In the Greek use of St. Paul's time the word translated "propitiation" means "propitiatory gift," and thus the meaning of the passage is as Deissmann correctly puts it: "The crucified Christ is the votive-gift of the Divine love for the salvation of men . . . God's favour must be obtained—He Himself fulfils the preliminary conditions; Men can do nothing at all, they cannot so much as believe—God does all in Christ: that is the religion of Paul, and our passage in Romans is but another expression of this same mystery of salvation." Or as the same truth is stated by Beyschlag:—"The idea of a 'propitiation through faith' suggests quite a different train of thought. It suggests a means of atonement, which reveals its atoning power only to the faith which on the part of man appropriates it; that is,

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it works atonement, not by concealing sin from God [this in opposition to Ritschl], but through what it works in the believing man. And that is nothing else than the breach with sin. And now we understand the true New Testament conception of the Atonement in our apostle, which is not ritual but ethical; the only sufficient means of destroying sin, the only full atonement in the sight of God, is a person and a deed which, like Christ, in His self-sacrifice, contains the power of breaking sin in man, and which really exercises this power in the believer."

This passage from Romans is the strongest passage which can be quoted in favour of the view that the death of Christ wrought the Atonement by satisfying the justice of an offended God; but when it is examined this interpretation of it breaks down at every point. As Canon Moberly has lately insisted, with as much force as truth, the forgiveness of our sins by God is not a capricious, or a merely amiable act, but a righteous act, because its pre-supposition is forgiveableness on the part of the sinner. Man changes, be it in ever so small a degree, towards God, and that very change carries with it *ipso facto* the unveiling of the Father's love.

The second passage quoted above clearly explains what St. John meant by his earlier saying that "Jesus Christ the Righteous is the propitiation for our sins." It was through God's love and not merely because of His wrath that "He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In other words it is not even the death of Jesus Christ, considered

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singly, which St. John declares to be the propitiatory thing, but Jesus Christ Himself, in the totality of His activity. He does but say in his own language what St. Paul says when he remarks: "God commendeth His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

With these passages thus interpreted every other reference to the ransoming, reconciling, redeeming, condescending work of Christ may be and should be brought into agreement. And the conclusion to which they all bring us when taken as a whole is:—

(1). That God was in all that Christ did; it was God's purpose which was to be seen in Christ's holy life, accursed death, and solidarity with sinners.

(2). That it is thus God who makes it possible for man to enter into union once more with Himself.

(3). That His mode of reconciling us is by giving a plain and visible proof that if we wish for reconciliation He is more than ready to meet us half-way. He gave His Son; how shall He not then with Him freely give us all things?

(4). That the sight of this love it is which breaks the power of selfishness, *i.e.*, of sin within us. When the power of sin is thus broken the atonement has begun.

(5). That the voluntary act by which we turn to God and away from self is treated by Him as being what it really is, our death unto sin and our new birth unto righteousness.

The true symbol of Atonement, therefore, is not to be found in any bloody sacrifice of the Old Testa-

ment, but in the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, where man's sin is represented as a departure from the presence of the Father, and his reconciliation as his ethical abandonment of selfishness on the one side, and the ready acceptance of his conversion on the other.

From this it follows that we are not to see the Atonement in the act of God alone, nor in the act of man alone, but in a result which is due to the activity of both; to God's preventing love and to man's consequent conversion. Nor is it quite correct to say without qualification that "the Incarnation is the Atonement," any more than it is correct to limit the Atonement to the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It would be more to the point to say that it is the Incarnation which supplies the basis for the Atonement. If the mind of God is not seen in the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ then we have no guarantee that His death was God's very own appeal to us to come back to Him. We might admire, nay, revere Jesus Christ as a hero and a saint, but should hardly find Him to be our Saviour. He becomes our Saviour when He is accepted as the deliberate revelation of the disposition of our Father towards us even while we are yet sinners.

The twentieth century, so far from banishing the Atonement to the limbo of exploded delusions will bring it forth again as a truth more bright and powerful than ever. It will put behind its back, and rightly, all substitutionary explanations, all conceptions born of servile fear, which are hemmed in by lower and out-worn theories of expiation and

propitiation, and will dwell on the ethical character of the reconciliation wrought by Jesus Christ in His death especially, as manifested in the highest and last proof of His utter love for the friends for whom He laid down His life. It will remember that there is no forgiveness of sins without conversion, and no conversion without forgiveness of sins. It will love to dwell on the power of love to evoke love in return, and so to slay sin, and in the death of sin it will find the Atonement made actual. Its favourite texts in which to express its gratitude for the reconciliation will always be, in short: "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; and therefore, "I am crucified with Christ," for "we judge that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER X.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.

THE purpose of this chapter is not to discuss that evasive subject the teaching of the Church but to outline the origin, nature and functions of the Church herself. Every institution, indeed every emergent fact, is the embodiment of some idea, and the question we are setting ourselves is what is the idea of which the Church is the expression? It has been said that all controversies which set Christians one against the other run up into differences of opinion as to the nature of the Church. If so it is no futile question set us when we are asked to say what we of the twentieth century are to think about the Church.

When we attempt our reply the first thought that occurs is that one of two solutions is generally offered. If I may be allowed to quote from published words of my own these two conflicting solutions are of this kind. "The Catholic view is that the Church is the organisation through which alone God dispenses His grace to the Christian, that the Sacraments are the ordinary channel of its action, and the priesthood their guardians, living instruments and guarantors. The individual, that is, finds

God through the Church. The Protestant view is that God acts directly on souls, and that they when effectually moved take their place by an act of their own private judgment in the Christian community, and so either form it as at the beginning, or continue it as to-day. The Catholic view makes the Church the parent of devotion. The Protestant makes devotion the mother of the Church."

It will be noticed that each of these two views is logical and coherent, and that as much may be said for one *a priori* as for the other. Socialism in like manner may make out for itself an unanswerable case so long as the appeal is to general principles only, and so may individualism. But if general principles be, by consent of both parties, abandoned in favour of an appeal to historical facts there then may be some chance of a decisive issue being raised. It is to the law and the testimony that we must go. What do they tell us?

In the first place the support they lend to the so-called Catholic view is of a very doubtful character. That view may be described without offence as a particular kind of ecclesiastical pantheism. The Church is the Body of Christ, we are reminded. The Holy Spirit is the *Anima mundi* of that Body. Its life is not the sum of the lives of the individuals composing it, but a Divine force energising independently, and making itself felt in a peculiar way in General Councils, or at any rate in the general consciousness of the members. This conception, it may be admitted, is not without warrant from the Epistle to the Ephesians from which the phrase the "Body

of Christ " is taken. Moreover, if it be once granted that this metaphorical phrase is understood accurately in the sense just given, then the comparison in I. Cor. xii. of the Church to a human body, and the parable of the Vine in St. John xv. may be legitimately used to reinforce such an interpretation. But, on the other hand, attention must be given to such facts as these :—

(i.) That there exists no more fruitful source of error in theology than the habit of treating rhetoric as logic, the language of the heart as that of the head, poetry as prose. To which may be added the danger attaching to any attempt to push a metaphorical phrase, such as the one before us undoubtedly is, further than the author used it. His sense in which the Church is the Body of Christ may be true and yet our further inferences may be false.

(ii.) It is difficult for anyone who has become familiar by constant living intercourse with the mind of St. Paul to believe that the Epistle to the Ephesians is from his pen, or represents his inner mind as the Epistles to the Romans or Corinthians undoubtedly do. Its interest as coming from one of his school may be great, and yet, if it is not from the master himself, its importance is not such as to warrant us in building up a whole system of comprehensive doctrines on one or two isolated metaphors in it. This same caution applies equally, of course, to the similar phrases which might be quoted from the Epistle to the Colossians, the claim of which to a Pauline authorship is stronger than that of the sister Epistle.

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(iii). The strongest objection of all, however, to this "ecclesiastical pantheism" is that it is out of keeping with the conception of the Kingdom as taught by Jesus Christ. His preaching of the Kingdom was an appeal to the religious instinct in man to recognise God as the Father, and to adopt a manner of living pleasing to Him and in consonance with His nature of perfection. To each individual the call came, and as each listened and obeyed he became a member of the Kingdom, of that society which in after days was known as the Church. It is impossible to quote any saying of Jesus which demands from the candidate for membership in the Kingdom acceptance of the view that a metaphysical character attached to the Christian community which he was joining, or which even suggests that such a character was present to His own mind at all. Faith in Him, or acceptance of His Gospel for the individual was the one uniform and consistent burden of His message. So that we are driven to the conclusion that if the metaphysical view be correct then it is a subsequent revelation, due to the growth of the later disciples in the knowledge of the content of the Gospel. If it be a development then it must be treated as subject to the canon of criticism of all true developments, viz., that they must conform to type. And it can hardly be contended that a highly mystical doctrine is to be regarded as in the line of development from teaching which was marked throughout by a deliberate disregard of what was not at once simple, practical, and religious.

(iv.) Let us add, in case anybody objects to this that then the New Testament knows only of local Churches and not of one Church of the living God, that the Christian community could never be a mere federation of local Churches for the simple reason that the Kingdom of God as a unity had gone before the local Church. Each such local body, therefore, was something more than a self-contained and distinct whole. It was first and foremost a section of the Kingdom already set up on earth, and awaiting its full and early glorification. But this idea of the Kingdom as an ethical and spiritual society composed of a number of converted individuals, and depending for its very existence on their conformity to the life of the Founder is as wide as the poles asunder from the metaphysical system which has come to take its place in later stages of development.

The bearing of this on our present purpose should be obvious. What the present century has inherited is a belief in the progress of humanity towards the goal of perfection. Civilization, it is recognised, means the working out of the brute, the dying out of the ape and tiger in us, the spiritualisation of the material, the establishment of altruism as ruler of the self-regarding virtues. Such a civilization is in fact in progress within and around. Let it grow. When it has become universal and complete the Kingdom of God will be set up on earth in very truth. But that is precisely what on our view Jesus Christ came to effect. That is an exact description of the nature of the Kingdom

which He founded. What social forces have been unconsciously working out at infinite cost and suffering, He made it our business to accomplish consciously and joyfully. The laws of God's working in the world run parallel, therefore, with the law of the Kingdom of Christ. And it is our age which sees and feels the emphasis laid upon their agreement.

Which view of the Church, therefore, we may well ask, is this century likely to adopt—that which dangles before our eyes a theological entity hung up between heaven and earth, or that which points us to a holy society of men and women pledged to further the coming of a Kingdom whose characteristic is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost? The one is a speculation, the other a practical reality. We cannot doubt for a moment that the "Catholic" view is doomed, and that the "Protestant" view is the one which alone suits the testimony of the New Testament, is worthy of the sublime purpose of Jesus Christ, and maintains the character of His teaching as a Gospel and not a Philosophy, and has the additional advantage that it can enlist in its support the best thought and aspiration of the age we live in.

The terms "Catholic" and "Protestant" have been used here without being endorsed. They are historically inexact, but like many other terms which use has deflected from their early and historical signification, they are those commonly understood at the present day. Accordingly, they are used here because the writer wishes first of all to be

understood, and for that end is willing to sacrifice pedantry. With this proviso he would quote the late Auguste Sabatier who, in his *Outlines*, takes the same view as that taken above.

"Protestants affirm that they belong to the Church because they belong to Christ. Catholics reverse the terms: no one is in communion with Christ, no one really belongs to Him unless he belongs to the Church. Thus faith in the Church and submission to the Church are to be put in the forefront and remain the one thing needful and essential."

Closely akin to the metaphysical view of the Church is the doctrine of its organisation. Indeed, if the dogma that the Church is the Body of Christ, is in the very forefront of the articles of the Christian faith, then so must its organisation be. Conversely; if it can be shown that no stress whatever was laid on organisation by Jesus Christ, then it follows that He did not present the Church as an organised body to be believed in, or obeyed, or submitted to on pain of loss of Christian privileges. Fortunately, no doubt whatever now exists as to the origin of the Christian ministry, and, therefore, there should be no doubt as to the essential character of the Church He founded.

In the Preface to the "Ordinal of the Church of England" it is laid down as the reason why the threefold ministry is to be continued by her that "it is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of

Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

This is an important statement, and one which, like the English Reformers' work generally, has nothing to fear from any fierce light of history. It is historically certain that the threefold ministry has been with us from the Apostles' time downwards. But what is more eloquent than the Reformers' words is their silence. They do not say, as many seem to think they might and ought to have said, that by Divine appointment the three Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons have always been in the Church. And those of us who are called on to assent to the book of the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons may be grateful for their self-restraint and caution and strict sense of truthfulness. For amid much uncertainty as to the details of the birth and growth of the historic Episcopate it may be regarded now as proved beyond all controversy that Christ left no official ministry of any kind at all.

Before we deal with this, however, let us notice one indirect proof that He did not. As everyone knows, the Apostolic Church expected without any tremor of hesitation that God's holy servant, Jesus, would return in glory to establish the Messianic Kingdom almost immediately, and certainly in the lifetime of their own generation. But would it not have been impossible for them so to misunderstand Him had He left behind Him directions for the establishment of an official ministry which should have regard to the long time which was to elapse between His departure and His final return?

Would not such a ministry have killed at the birth any belief in His immediate return and been a standing testimony to a long period of waiting? It seems to us impossible that such a belief could have sprung up and flourished side by side with the settled ministry of a settled Church.

Others would prefer to put this argument, which even in its attenuated form above, seems to us of great weight, in a still stronger form. They would say that Jesus Himself held the belief in His speedy return, and that the disciples' belief was no misunderstanding of His teaching, but a faithful reproduction of it. If so, clearly the case against the appointment by Him of a settled ministry is still stronger, for how could He have said that He would return almost immediately and yet act as if He expected nothing of the sort? It is obvious of course that any provision made for an official ministry must be based on the supposition that a considerable period of time would be available for its exercise. Conversely: a belief that the time was short was fatal to the appointment of a settled and official ministry.

We may be thankful that the Apostolic Church was suffered to enjoy the illusion of a speedy end of all things. For it was thus prevented from turning the Gospel into a machinery, and was able to afford a proof to every succeeding age that no one system of organisation of any sort was essential to the life of the Church.

What then were the characteristics which may be traced in the government of the Apostolic Age?

Many functions are mentioned in the New Testament such as "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" (Eph. iv., 11); or as they are elsewhere described: "Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I. Cor. xii., 28). It is difficult with the evidence before us to say for certain how these functions were inter-related, whether they were held separately by distinct classes of men, and whether the rules for their exercise were the same in all the local Churches. But it is no hazardous statement to make when we say that they were all attributed to the special action of the Holy Spirit; and that their possession bestowed no "character" and set apart to no distinct office. The Apostolic Church would not have understood an assertion that once a prophet always a prophet, or the later canon—once a priest always a priest. He who had some spiritual gift exercised it when and as he could, but the fact that some had higher gifts than others was not held to be a warrant for making any such distinction as was afterwards made between clergy and laity. From one point of view it might be said that all Christians were clergy, as from another that all were laity. They formed a Church and had not yet developed into the distinction of clergy and laity which caused the declaration that for 1,500 years there has been no Church but two parties, one offering and one accepting the privileges of Christianity.

Besides the functions already named there appear in the New Testament elders and deacons and

bishops, three groups to which the origin of our threefold ministry has long been traced. But it is now generally agreed that these three names do not represent any distinct offices, and indeed that an elder and a bishop might be, and probably were very commonly, one and the same person on two sides of his activities. Whether "elder" be a term borrowed from the Jewish gerousia, or from Egyptian and heathen associations; whether "bishop" be a growth of Greek soil taking us to the thiasi for an explanation of its origin, are matters of great interest to the scholar, but hardly appropriate for a discussion meant for the general reader. What concerns him is the broad fact on which scholars are agreed, that whatever the functionaries were they *came to be*, and were not there in the very beginning. Indeed, the references to them in the New Testament seem to justify the belief that it is only in the later Apostolic Age that they were found at all. If so, then the most reasonable account of their origin is that their emergence marks the period when the ecstatic gifts of the Spirit began to give way to a more calm and sober temper, that is, when a settled ministry began to be felt as a want. Some one must act as president at the business meetings of the Church when the question of relieving the poor and the widows came up for decision. Some one must preside at the Agape or the Eucharist. Some one must communicate with other local Churches and speak for his own community. And so under the slow action of quite intelligible forces the threefold ministry came to be a fact of history.

The Lambeth Conference of 1897 appointed a Committee to consider and report upon the subject of Church Unity, and that Committee when dealing with the question of unity with Christian bodies other than the Eastern and Roman Churches, that is, presumably having chiefly in their minds the Nonconforming bodies of this country, laid down among four Articles which, in their opinion, supplied a basis on which approach might be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion the following :—

“ The historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the “ methods of its administration to the varying needs “ of the nations and peoples called of God into the “ Unity of His Church.”

The Keyword of this Article was generally felt to be the word *Historical*. That is to say, the Committee endorsed the finding of the Preface to the “ Ordinal ” and invited Nonconformists to admit what they would have no difficulty in doing, that the Episcopate has been an historical fact in the world for 1,800 years, without calling on them to assent to the proposition that its institution was to be ascribed directly to Divine appointment.

There can be no doubt that it is along the line thus drawn that the Home Reunion of the future will progress. But it cannot be an accomplished fact unless both of the two high contracting parties, the English Church and the Nonconformists, accept the theology of the Church as plainly laid down in the New Testament, and shown in the history of the Apostolic Church. The argument between

them meanwhile must be one which endeavours to find common ground for two ideals which differ without being contradictory. The aim of the English Church is to make due provision for order ; and the maintenance of an historic form, to which no superstitious conceptions attach, offers a suitable means of attaining an orderly union. On the other hand, the Nonconformist aims rather at securing a ministry of which spiritual gifts shall be the chief glory. The former represents the social order established through many centuries, and the latter is anxious that the individual shall have full scope for the exercise of the gift with which the Spirit has endowed him.

It ought not to be impossible to secure an elastic system in which both of these ideals should find place for due realisation. But before it can be obtained there will have to be an agreement about the doctrine of Jesus Christ and His Apostles as to the nature and functions of the Church. There needs no prophet to tell us that the form of that doctrine which will more and more win its way in this century will be of the general character outlined above.

THE DOCTRINE OF MEDIATION.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOCTRINE OF MEDIATION.

THE days of abstract theology, it must be sadly confessed, are over. Ages long laid asleep displayed the infallibility of youth on high topics such as the very Essence of the God-head, about which we more humdrum people are content to confess our ignorance. We, for our part, are grateful enough if we can find sufficient light for our steps as we stumble along the path of duty, and are beginning to suspect that absolute truth, truth not empirical, is not for such as we are. "No line is possible between what has come to men, and their interpretation of what has come to them

. . . The words and facts of Gospel history and of apostolic history, as historical and literary phenomena, demand to be subjected to historical and literary criticism." Man's knowledge is limited to his experiences, and those are confined within his capacities. What lies beyond is shrouded in darkness. That is, men nowadays are more ready to act on what they do know than to dogmatise or even speculate about what they do not. They know the way and are content with the assurance that its

goal is what will satisfy their deepest longings, but they also know, because their longings are so deep, that the prize awaiting them at the goal is beyond their understanding. So they hope, and struggle, and pray for light, but are less despondent than of yore if the light is sometimes dim.

The doctrine of mediation then is of more practical importance nowadays than the *Quaestiones*, in which St. Thomas Aquinas seeks to define the attributes of the Godhead. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" is a question which receives to-day its proper reply that it may give place to others, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? How may I become one with God? What doth the Lord require of me before He will lift up the light of His countenance upon me?

Of one thing Christianity is more and more sure, with the certainty born of a long and chequered spiritual experience. It knows that no man cometh to the Father but by Jesus Christ. It admits freely enough indeed that man can attain to a knowledge of God even where the Christian revelation has not been consciously accepted as such, just because the heart of man was made for God. But this admission does not alter the historical fact that through Jesus Christ alone has man come to know God as his Father. The difficulty really begins when men ask themselves how the Son unites them thus to the Father. Is it by self-revelation in the Light, or by self-communication in the gift of Life? Is it by the gift of some new thing which we did not possess before, or by the stirring into activity forces in us

which were already ours by nature but latent and forgotten?

One answer to this question has been given emphatically through long centuries. Christ came indeed to give Light, it is conceded, but it was not Light that man required so much as Life. He knew, even at the birth of Christianity, it is argued, enough for everyday duty, but it was strength to do it which was lacking. This strength the Son of God undertook to supply. He did it by making men "partakers of the Divine Nature," especially by giving them His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink in the Sacrament of His love. His Manhood was filled through and through with His Godhead, a reservoir of renewed life from which our weakness might draw at will. It is His glorified Manhood, in some ineffable way united with the consecrated elements of the Eucharist, on which we feed, and that better Human Nature of His comes to the relief of ours, is incorporated with our dual nature, reinvigorates our spiritual essence, and gradually by frequent Communion even transforms our mortal bodies, so that at the proper time they rise again, but to a glorified and spiritual life. It is true that the admission is also made that without faith Communion loses all virtue for us, and that we eat and drink to our own damnation if we communicate without faith. But it is also held that the least degree of faith is sufficient, for it secures the Gift, and That being received It produces in us more faith and gives us strength to bring forth fruits of holiness.

Now, the first remark to be made on this is that,

whether a true view or not, it has no warrant in what we are told of the method of salvation in the New Testament. The whole trend of the teaching of Jesus Christ is in quite another direction. St. Paul's "gospel" as he calls it—and it is a rounded and consistent gospel which he teaches—is of quite a different character. The passages by which it professes to justify itself from the New Testament are few, and when adduced have to be torn from their context, and for the most part must submit to have the sacramental teaching read into them, not educed from them. This want of Biblical support surely is a fact which deserves some little consideration by those who declare that non-fasting Communion is a mortal sin, are sincerely perturbed if a man dies without the Viaticum, and doubt the fate of a pious person who may have been carelessly baptized.

Our second remark is that those who hold that this system of sacramental teaching is utterly untrue, and issues in idolatry, are on their side equally bound to account for its acceptance by numbers of devout and saintly souls, whose Christ-like lives are at least as much above suspicion as the lives of those who oppose their beliefs. Is it possible for light to come out of darkness, and for the spirit of man to extract divine nutriment out of the husks of falsehood? Must there not be something in the Sacraments which those who belittle them have not discovered? If not, how are we to account for sweetness coming out of the eater?

It is no answer to these questions to say that too often the upholders of sacramental grace display an

ecclesiastical narrowness and a superciliousness not far removed from the Pharisaism which the Son of Man condemned more severely than any other temper. For very often the impugnors of the same grace display a temper no less distantly removed from the sweet reasonableness and genial humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. The faults of temper on both sides are not due to the doctrines held but to human infirmity, and must not be attributed to a cause with which they have nothing to do.

The truth is that the Spirit of Jesus is ever present with the Children of God. Whether they meet for prayer, for thanksgiving, for confession of sin, for instruction, or for inspiration, there they are met in the name and power of Jesus, and there He is in the midst of them. Where He is, there is light, and life, and pardon. It is of secondary importance whether He manifests His gracious Presence in sacred word, in inspired utterance, or in sacramental sign. In all alike He energises, and the help He giveth in each He giveth it Himself. But the form in which He reveals and imparts Himself is of course of secondary importance. One person, it may be, finds the Spirit more effectually in the inspired Word than in sacramental sign, and another is more moved by the Eucharist than by the Bible. Has then the truth become exploded that there are diversities of operations but the same Spirit? May not each joyfully recognise the grace given to his fellow, and turn a deaf ear to the temptation to fall foul of him with contemptuous labels which explain

nothing and end in nothing but perplexity and distress of soul?

Let it be granted that no Biblical authority exists for ascribing a Real Presence of Jesus Christ to and "under the forms of bread and wine," and that the worshipper who does so is mistaken on that point. But he is not mistaken in recognising a Presence of Jesus Christ in some sort, which after all is the one thing needful. Let those who do not even in thought localise the Presence, show some tender charity towards those who do, however mistaken they be. It is the Spirit alone Who will reveal to them their error, if error it be. Un-generous and harsh reproaches are but so many obstacles placed wantonly in the path of the Spirit.

This attitude towards the Sacraments, their use and abuse, is fast becoming that of our century. Tolerant as it is, it is disposed to be intolerant of those who raise to the first magnitude questions which start from mere differences of interpretation, or, as very often, from survivals of older and decaying beliefs. It bids us confine our energies to the essential, and learn to agree to differ about its varying modes of expression. And here it believes that it is returning to the most primitive model, for it finds that when St. Paul had to deal with a similar problem in the case of the Galatian Church he took his stand on the obligation to cherish the faith which worketh by love and to move freely among all formal additions which men might desire to add to the irreducible requirement of the Gospel.

“They that are strong” might possibly feel tempted to fortify their position by a second and subsidiary consideration. They might without much danger of rashness point out that the belief of to-day which holds that spiritual blessings are to be secured by the process of eating material things, or by the tactual use of material things, has its roots deep down in the bedrock of prehistoric beliefs. The cannibal who ate his captive, the Egyptian Pharaoh who ate the gods of the other world, the Arab who smeared his god with blood, the Jew who was circumcised, the women who ate cakes consecrated to the Queen of Heaven, all testify to the persistency of this faith in the spiritual benefit to be derived from material things when duly used. The common objection, sure to be intercalated here, that to track a custom back to its origin is not to explain away its higher developments has become a little tedious to us now. For it evades with ingenuity which is not wholly ingenuous the real point at issue, and that is, whether the higher stage of development in which we now are is the highest possible to us. And the answer to this must clearly be in the negative. When men in general begin to suspect that an ancient custom is no longer what it was to their forefathers they may safely conclude that they are being called to go up higher. And this is what is happening to-day. We shall go on using the old forms, but we shall cease to attribute any spiritual efficacy to the mere automatic use of them as forms. The spiritual good derived will be traced to the spiritual life which they

stir up in the user by way of remembrance or of exhortation. Spiritual life must have a spiritual cause, and the use of material media will be either that of self-expression or of appeals made to the spiritual life by those who are themselves spiritually minded.

This latter use brings us to note one important and abiding characteristic of sacraments in general. They are social rites, and their fullest meaning has reference to the Christian society which adopts them. Thus, to St. Augustine the Church itself was the inward part of the Eucharist. Communion was between believers. Baptism was the public profession of a faith already held. But both affected the individual mainly as they related him together with his fellow Christians to the Lord of them all. They performed also another very important service for the Church, and one that is no less required in modern times. They testified in the most unmistakable manner every time they were used that the Christian life was based on historical facts, and was not merely a mystic's dream. In the face of Theosophy and its kindred speculations this appeal to history in a simple and moving rite is by no means to be despised.

Sacraments, therefore, are not to be placed in the first rank as means of salvation, means, that is, by which the benefits of Christ's life and death are primarily mediated to us. He came to found a Kingdom of righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, and it is to spiritual powers such as are manifested in these graces that we must look for

union with Christ. That the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of justification is a fact about which all discussion is superfluous. But opinions have wavered between faith and knowledge and love as the formal cause. If we no longer use the scholastic terms and discuss the varying merits of *fides quæ creditur*, *fides quæ creditur* and *fides formata*, it is not that the problems they represent have lost their interest for us, but that they have assumed a more popular form. The ordinary person would ask to-day: Am I saved by faith, or knowledge, or love? And he deserves an answer.

Let us take knowledge first. What is meant by this word in the religious circles of to-day? Those who extol knowledge as the fountain of life seem to equate it with a certain philosophic explanation of the world which they regard the Church as having made her own. Through Origen and Augustine Platonism has become worked into Christian thought, even if indeed it has not formed its web and most of the woof. Through St. Thomas Aquinas and his fellow schoolmen, Aristotle—the magister of the Middle Age—has supplied a framework of criticism. The philosophy thus resulting, it is held, has received the Church's hall-mark of genuineness, and, therefore, in its main lines at least, is no longer open to question. All that needs to be done is to explore its recesses and bring reverently out into the light of day its concealed and glowing gems of wisdom. And he who humbly and reverently, with the modesty which becomes the unlearned, accepts this grand body of teaching,

and orders his thought and life in accordance with it, is in the way of salvation. His eyes may not be wholly opened, he may stumble and sometimes see men as trees walking, but these are accidents inseparable from the *via purgativa*. The one important thing, and indeed the one decisive fact, is that he has found the right road. Being on it he must, if he persevere, attain the proper end of the Christian's pilgrimage.

This *schema* we confess is not without its attractiveness, and it appeals moreover to that love of truth which sets so many of the noblest minds among us on a quest than which none is more sublime and more toilsome. But it has when closely examined several grave drawbacks. In the first place it is indistinguishable in principle from the Gnosis which in the second and third centuries of our era tried a fall with the Catholic Church and was heavily thrown. This issue, of course, will not be taken as final by those who regard it as an accident of history that the Catholic Church defeated her rival, but it is a serious obstacle to the Gnostic of to-day whose Gnosticism is that of the Church. For the Church of the earlier day took her stand on the broad ground that her treasure was a gospel and not a philosophy, a means of practical salvation and not chiefly enlightenment for the understanding. How then can her representatives to-day reverse her methods and invite us to accept as our means of salvation a Gnosis which does not lose its character by being rebaptized as Catholicism? The mere acceptance of creeds may ensure

a character for orthodoxy but it does not make a man a Christian.

The second difficulty we feel arises from the progressive character which attaches to knowledge in general. That knowledge does grow from more to more is, we take it, an axiom of modern thought which it has learned from a prolonged study of the evolution of man's intellectual life. But those who would persuade us that we are saved by knowledge also hold it as axiomatic that the knowledge which saves is on its objective side fixed and final. The Catholic Faith, they are never weary of reminding us, was once for all delivered to the saints as a polished and rounded whole, and it is an impiety to add to it, subtract from it, or alter what has once been received. It would take us too far away from our present purpose to show how lamentably the proposition that the Catholic Faith is a fixed body of truths begs the whole question and contradicts the whole course of Church History. It is sufficient to dwell on the fact that those who are imbued with the modern spirit find it as impossible to believe at once that knowledge is progressive and also fixed as that truth is a liar, or that a thing can be and also not be at the same time and in the same sense.

But a still greater difficulty awaits us. It is true that knowledge and faith are joined by St. John in his Epistle; that St. Paul speaks of the Christian growing in knowledge, and that the Fourth Gospel says "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." But in no case is the knowledge

thus referred to merely intellectual knowledge, still less is it the acceptance of certain given views about God considered as the basis of the new life. The knowledge in question is not so much of the head as the heart, wisdom rather than prudence, active more than contemplative, ethical and not philosophical. It is he who *does* the truth and not he who contemplates it, or systematises it, who comes to the light. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." It is "he that doeth righteousness" who is "righteous," and not he who theorises excellently well about it. To know God is to be ethically like God, to be one with Him in desire and will, that is the only knowledge which is commended to us in the New Testament.

We conclude then that it is not bare knowledge which is the medium of salvation on its formal side.

Is it then love? For an affirmative answer to this question much might be plausibly alleged from the New Testament. Did not Christ Himself reduce the whole of the commandments of God to one law of love in its twofold manifestation? Did He not declare that a certain sinner was forgiven much because she loved much? Did He not affirm that "he that keepeth My commandments he it is that loveth Me," and remind us that "by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one towards another"? Or, if we turn to St. Paul, do we not find him asserting that "love is the fulfilling of the law," and extolling charity as the greatest of the things which abide? All this is very

true and yet it may not follow that love is the medium by which we first come to Christ. In fact, he that cometh to God must first believe that He is, he that loves God for what He is must first have a conviction that He is worthy of love. The psychological order is faith first and then love as the first and grandest fruit of faith.

In repeating after St. Paul, Augustine, Luther, and a host of others that faith is the subjective mediator between God and man we must be on our guard again lest faith's unique value be depreciated by making it equivalent to belief. The knowledge which we have already rejected as our religious medium is apt to creep in again and be troublesome if we do not observe that belief is not necessarily faith. I may believe that Christ was God on the authority of the Church, much as I believe that the sun is largely composed of hydrogen gas on the authority of chemists. But in neither case is my belief faith as religion understands the word.

The most satisfactory definition of faith for all practical purposes is perhaps Matthew Arnold's, who says that it is "holding fast to unseen goodness," and that Christian faith identifies Christ with that unseen goodness. This saves it from being absorbed by knowledge, and asserts with sufficient distinctness its ethical character. Moreover, it implies the receptive character, which in St. Paul faith always wears, for who could refuse to open his heart when he stands in the presence of the Eternal Goodness? Moreover, it is faith which carries with it potentially all that man may attain,

for whoever holds fast to unseen goodness surrenders himself to it, and the self-surrender is as a seed from which perfect holiness is to blossom, and is well adapted, therefore, to be the formal cause of our justification, just because it already contains in germ all of love and purity and righteousness that man can hope for.

We conclude, therefore, that the subjective mean of union with God is faith; that faith has moral goodness for its object, that is, God revealed as a Moral Being; that it is not a quiescent but an active and growing virtue; that he who possesses it has the Spirit within as his inspirer; and that from the standpoint of the Spirit to Whom he clings by faith he is able to move freely among all outward ordinances of Church, Sacraments, Creeds, and ceremonial. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty," and that liberty is not merely concerned with external restraints, but what is far more precious, is an inward liberty from care, doubt, perplexity, and sin.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS.

IN no department of thought has the wheel come round in a more complete circle than in that which is concerned with Christian Eschatology. The problem which was so perplexing to Warburton and his contemporaries, no longer troubles the mind of this century. Different views indeed may be held in details as to the origin and incidence of the causes which kept Moses silent on the question of life after death, but in the main a general agreement has been reached that the earliest records of Israel say little or nothing about the other life, simply because their writers were more concerned with their nation's welfare in this world than with the individual's fate in the next. If before Jeremiah wrote the stress of religious anxiety had not fallen on the individual, but on the chosen Nation as a corporate whole, it is little wonder that prophets and psalmists pass over the abode of Sheol with a light touch and a mind intent on other things. The eschatological problem of the Old Testament has

ceased to have any attraction to-day because it has been reduced within intelligible limits.

The same remark, however, cannot be made of the New Testament, or at all events not so unreservedly. It is true that we are beginning to understand better the outlook of writers like the Synop-
tists, St. Paul and St. John, and that we appreciate more thoroughly their limitations, and so have acquired a far more penetrating sense of their real and unique greatness. But it is also true that in the popular mind, in manuals of partisan theology, and in much of our pulpit teaching may be heard echoes still of the narrow and less well-informed teaching of either Mediaeval or Calvinistic circles. The charge of "timidity" and "superficiality" is brought not infrequently against our English theologians, and not wholly without cause, and certainly these characteristics are nowhere more apparent than in our treatment of Eschatology. We cling to old and inferior views of the Unseen World, even when we are aware of their hollowness, from some craven fear that we may be launched on the ocean of doubt deprived of chart and compass. And yet this age is being called in no uncertain tones by the Spirit of God to more spiritual, and therefore, more satisfying conceptions of what awaits us at death. The duty laid upon us, therefore, here as elsewhere, is at once destructive and constructive, to let the old forms perish and give place to the new. The transition may involve pain, but growing pains are inseparable from progress upwards. "Death unto life," "life growing out of death" is the inner principle, or

secret, applied in an indefinite variety of ways, but running through the history of most, perhaps all religious aspiration and attainment.

It may be convenient perhaps to divide what we have to say on the Eschatological belief of the opening century under the common heads of Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.

(1.) The savage man in his lowest stage of development has one uniform view of death. It is to him an intruder on the realm of life, something unnatural which would not happen at all but for witchcraft. Put violence and witches on one side and he regards himself as immortal by nature. Witchcraft is the force appealed to by our primitive man when he first begins to philosophise about death. It was perhaps a step in advance when the sinister action of malignant spirits was made the efficient cause of death. It was certainly a far longer step in advance when death was said to have first come into the world as a punishment for man's disorderly living, for his self-willed defiance of the laws appointed him by the Moral Governor of the Universe. But one factor entered into all these earlier philosophic attempts to explain the disconcerting fact of death as the one event which happens to all. Fear embittered contemplative minds in presence of the mystery. Through the fear of death they were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

This fear has been weakened by the secular causes which are operative at the present moment. One is the powerful influence exerted over men's

imaginings by the uprising of the altruistic sentiment, by the growing sense of the solidarity of mankind, by the death-bed reflection that our relations are left behind to continue the struggle from which death appears to set us free. The second cause is the claim made in the name of the Uniformity of Law to include even Death within the sweep of its scope. As the Greek mind thought that death was as much a part of Nature's working as birth, and to be, therefore, as little feared, so the modern spirit under the influence of its sense of universal and unbroken Order is coming to gaze at death with unblinking eyes as no more an evil than the age of puberty or the supersession of a lower civilization by a higher. It is but the taking of a degree in the university of life, a step upward in the scale of being, or at any rate a step forward.

The sole thought which disturbs the calm of the modern man in the presence of death is the unexplored character of the land of which it is the portal. All go there, but none come back to tell us what they have found.

"Strange, is it not, that of the myriads who

"Before us passed the door of darkness through

"Not one returns to tell us of the road

"Which to discover we must travel too? "

The modern poet's comment on Lazarus is that he told not his experiences, or else something sealed the lips of his Evangelist. The scientific spirit which is so busy investigating the material universe which is our present home is impelling its scholars to try to unravel the secrets of the other world. The

only persons who profess to know anything about it are the Spiritualists, and they can hardly be said at present to have placed life after death on a scientific footing.

To the two potent forces at work which have just been referred to must be added a third, which has its source in pantheistic modes of thought, higher or lower. We derive our existence as individuals, we are reminded, from the One, Eternal, Infinite Spirit. For His own purposes—or are we to say because of *Its* innate movement of Becoming?—He brought us into existence. There was a moment when we had no individual existence. From His own Being He threw us out, and when He has done with us here we shall slip back into the Infinite depth. Where then, it is asked, is the assurance that as we came from the Great All, so we shall not return to it? How can we know that the Form which is ourself is to persist through Death? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that as Birth gave it its existence so Death will give it its quietus, so that it merely loses itself and becomes a drop once more in the Ocean of Being?

These are questions which are profoundly agitating the minds of many earnest and sincere souls to-day. Where then is the balm of Gilead which is to give them healing and rest? The present writer knows not where to point the anxious enquirer if not to one authority, and that is the authority of the New Testament and in particular to one writer in it, St. Paul. He believes that what the age needs is a return to

152. The Doctrine of the Last Things

the teaching of St. Paul on the subject of Death and Resurrection, to the genuine teaching of St. Paul, that is, and not to the perverted version of it which is our legacy from Augustinian and Calvinistic theology.

Before describing what St. Paul has to say on this subject one caution must be given, which is likely to recur at every step when we try to discover a safe standpoint for the problem of Eschatology. It is this. The whole question is one for faith and not for demonstration. It is too commonly treated in the reverse way. Manuals of popular theology could easily be quoted where astounding conclusions are dogmatically drawn from doubtful texts, and then enforced as part of the tradition obligatory on the loyal Christian. Statements of faith are treated as propositions of the reason, and then logic is called in as a master to build up a system where nothing is more stable than the foundation itself. It is this system which makes it so difficult for St. Paul's illuminating doctrine to get a calm and impartial hearing to-day.

We ask, then, what is this neglected doctrine of St. Paul's about Death which is to supply the answer to the anxious questionings of to-day? If we reply that in St. Paul's scheme of thought Death occupied a very small space we may be charged with playing with paradoxes. But such is, nevertheless, the fact. Neither in the mind of St. Paul, nor in that of the Apostolic Church as a whole, was death much dwelt upon, for the simple reason that at first the visible return of Jesus Christ in Messianic glory

was thought to exclude the necessity of dying. It was very slowly that the Church acquiesced in the delay of the Parousia and fell back, as in II. Peter, on explanations the very futility of which shows the perplexity from which they sprang.

None the less, St. Paul has given from the point of view of "his gospel," that is, from an ethical presentment of the Life and Death of Jesus Christ, a suggestive train of thought in which Death and Resurrection are made to fall into line with the purpose of God as revealed in the earthly Life of Him Who was at once in a unique sense Son of Man and Son of God. The most significant feature in St. Paul's doctrine about Christ's Death and Resurrection is the low estimate he places on them as mere incidents in a physical Life. To him they are not isolated events. He refuses to separate them from their antecedents and consequences. A duality of thought even seems to him to be abhorrent. His thought is not in shreds and patches. He will not look to the Life of Jesus for moral inspiration, to His Death for evidence that God has been reconciled, and to His Resurrection for proof that we shall rise again. He even implies that he did not accept, or else had never heard, of the physical proofs by which the Resurrection Body of his Master was shown to be that physical Body which had been laid in the tomb of Joseph. His standpoint is of quite a different character.

What he is most concerned with is not the Resurrection from the grave of physical death but the Resurrection from the Death of sin, and he treats

the former as subsidiary to the latter and not *vice versa*. To him death means first of all separation from the life of God through sin. That is what is reserved for the sinner. But when he comes to treat of the Christian's experience death means a death unto sin, and its correlative is a new birth unto righteousness. Christ died unto sin from the first by manfully withstanding every temptation to self-will which assailed Him. He died unto sin once and for all when He met and overcame the bitterest temptation of all. But also Death and Resurrection are the two sides of the same shield. He who dies unto sin at that very moment rises again to righteousness. Old things are passed away, all things become new. Jesus died unto sin from the first. Therefore, also, He rose from the first, and what we commonly call His Resurrection was but the final step in a long drawn-out process of Resurrection from the life lived to self to life lived for the Father.

Further, what St. Paul predicates of Christ he also predicates of the Christian. That man alone is a Christian, whose experience is the same in kind, if not in degree, as that of his Lord. He who, like Christ, dies to sin and rises again to righteousness has put on Christ—to use St. Paul's vivid metaphor—has been buried with Him and risen again to newness of life. If he has been a partaker of His Death, he will be also of His Resurrection, and that to the same degree of fulness. Where the Master is, there must also the servant be.

This brings us then to what we suggested is the

reply to those suffering from pantheistic doubt. Man has a principle of life within him, urges St. Paul. That principle fashions for itself a material body as its organ while it has to energise in a material universe. Similarly, when it is ethicised and spiritualised in the school of Christ it develops the capacity for life in a moral and spiritual sphere. This implies that it is all the time of its education slowly forming for itself a spiritual body adapted to be its organ when it puts off this mortal body. It will then be found ready to be "clothed upon." Having sown to itself in righteousness it will reap its reward in everlasting life. He that is worthy will attain to that Resurrection from the dead for which St. Paul so thirsted. But when it is attained it will not be in any mechanical fashion. The reward will not be given externally, but produced internally, and that by due process of law. He that lives godly in this present life is engaged, even though he little suspect it, in preparing for himself a glorious Form adapted for the higher stage of existence which ensues when Death is swallowed up in victory.

We repeat that this does not pretend to rest upon any logical proof, and St. Paul himself would have retorted with his "Thou fool" on anybody who had demanded of him chapter and verse for his assertions. And he would have been right. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The man whose master passion is for holiness grows more and more certain with an inward conviction that a holy spirit is superior to all accidents of a physical kind. The man to whom holiness is unknown has no witness in himself, and probably is incapable of any.

If the rejoinder be made to this argument that its logical corollary is a denial of the resurrection of the wicked, our reply is twofold. (i.) St. Paul, it is true, never speaks in any of his Epistles of any Resurrection but that of the righteous. Though we are not justified in concluding from his silence that he did not hold any belief in the resurrection of the wicked, yet we are justified in saying that he placed little importance on it as a factor in the inculcation of the religious life. (ii.) St. Paul expressly allows for an indefinite variety of degrees of life in the next world. "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the Resurrection of the dead." God's love is wide enough to find room for every degree of holiness in the souls of the redeemed from the lowest to the highest. And it may well be, we would fain hope, that in the boundless resources of His Power He will find means sooner or later to bring to His own haven of rest every soul He ever launched on the ocean of life, no matter how grievous its wanderings in search of some self-chosen good had been, no matter how defiant its contempt for the Pole-star He had eternally set in the heaven for its guidance.

(2.) We may dismiss briefly the Christian conception of Judgment. In sublime imagery the Gospels and other Apostolic writings describe it as the consummation of all things, as the final recognition of the eternal distinction between right and wrong, as the recompensing of men according to

their works. And yet side by side with these parabolic pictures are other passages which speak of Judgment as a continuous process, of Christ's words as being the touchstone wherever they are heard. The hand of the Recording Angel is ever at work engraving on the souls of men the consequence which awaits their doings, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. What a man is is the inevitable result of what he does, and his character, as open to the All-Seeing eye, itself is an automatic judgment upon his life. It needs no celestial trumpet, no opening of material books, no return to the corruptible body, no audible voice of the most Just God to declare man's merits or demerits. They are declared already, so far as the man has lived and acted and suffered. They are being continually declared so long as he continues to meet the moral problems presented by life.

When the declarations of the future Judgment are stripped of their imagery they are seen to shadow forth a truth of awful solemnity. It shall be well, eternally well, with him whose life, and consequently whose character is morally good. It shall be ill, and eternally ill, for him whose life and character are evil. Whether any beings shall be found to fill in the latter category is unknown and must be unknown to us. The Christian's hope, however, must be, and ought to be, that not one shall in the last resource be found to call evil good and good evil, or to refuse his homage of cheerful and willing reverence for the Good, the True, the Pure, the Just.

It will have been observed that the conceptions

of Death and Judgment which have been outlined above, however they may differ from those entertained by the naïve consciousness of the natural man, are yet on all fours with the religious teaching of the Bible, and have the additional advantage of falling easily under the grand principles of Uniformity of Law and of Evolution which to-day hold the intellectual field. On both grounds, therefore, I venture to affirm that they will establish themselves as an integral part of the theology of the twentieth century.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS
(CONTINUED).



CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS

(CONTINUED).

IN spite of the momentous issues which depend from the crises of Death and Judgment, the fact still remains true that man's chief hopes and fears are less with them than with the realities which are shadowed out by the terms Heaven and Hell. Death and Judgment are but the vestibule to the Court, and it is the Court with all its dread possibilities to which man's eyes are naturally turned.

(3.) It may be convenient to discuss the theology of Heaven and Hell at the same time, for they are the two inseparable poles of the moral axis round which man's spiritual life revolves. It is a mistake, however, to argue, as has been done so frequently, that the same notes must attach to the one as to the other, that an endless duration of bliss for the good involves as its necessary correlation an endless duration of misery for the lost. For this argument makes the unwarrantable assumption that man's nature swings indifferently between the two extremes, and forgets that all the forces of God are engaged on the side of that which makes for man's

bliss, and against the life which is death in living. A radical change has come over our conceptions of Heaven and Hell during the last century. Men have never been wanting to protest against the comfortable doctrine of eternal damnation as incapable of being harmonised with Christ's conception of the Father in Heaven. But the difference to-day is that what was once the erratic belief of the prophet born out of due time has now become the settled conviction of the mass of men. True, Hell looms before the sinner on his death-bed, but it is no longer a fixed certainty of endless misery which terrifies him, but a certain looking for of the unknown. That punishment awaits his sin he knows right well, but it is its unknown character which fills him with dread. But this fear means no more than the undying consciousness of man that it can never be well with the sinner, either here or hereafter.

This later form of remorse, however, does not diminish the significance of the change which has come over our thinking about our final destiny. It is a matter of common remark that the Christian pulpit seldom or never echoes with warnings about the hell of the sinner. Hell-fire no longer frightens men. Indeed the very imagery with which the older divinity loved to clothe its awful descriptions seems unreal and shadowy to-day. That literal fire was once believed to be the avenging angel of God's wrath is beyond all question, as is the fact that the Athanasian Hymn intends "everlasting fire" to be taken in its plain and literal acceptation. Both the

literalness and the endlessness of the fire are more than doubted to-day; they are more than denied even; they are treated as clothes of our childhood which have been cast aside, and of which no further notice need be taken by the grown up man. They hardly obtain the dignity of serious consideration.

To what are we to attribute this revolution? Mainly to two causes. The first is the increased emphasis which a more tender-hearted humanity lays on the loving-kindness of God. It is felt to be an outrage on His revealed Nature to hold that He can ever acquiesce in the appalling misery which is threatened by eternal damnation. Should a single soul—and not merely the preponderating majority of mankind which the older theology surrendered to the Devil with hardly a pang—be utterly and for ever lost, then the agonising confession must be made that the resources of God are inadequate to cope with evil. The battle between Good and Evil has been joined; it has been prolonged through countless ages; but, as the older theology would have us think, it is not Goodness which has been triumphant but Evil, and all that the former succeeded in doing has been to snatch a portion of his prey from the spoiler—whether large or small matters not for our present purpose; that it could not rescue all must be written down as a confession of failure. If it be really so, we can but lay our finger on our lip and keep silence before the unsearchable judgments of God. But in the absence of all proof of so perplexing a phenomenon the best Christian consciousness will refuse

to entertain so low a view of the love, wisdom and power of the Father. It will hold fast to its religious faith in Him, and in spite of all the strife of tongues, will believe that His Will, if not done now, will some day, and somehow, be done perfectly by every intelligent soul which He has created.

But can this instinctive faith to which religion, as distinct from theology, clings, put in any responsive plea when challenged by popular tradition? We think it can. It can urge that the second cause at work, to which allusion was made above, is the answer to the sceptic's taunt. That is to say, it can point to the principle of evolution once again as a vindication of the ways of God to man. When this principle is applied to the current doctrine of heaven and hell it becomes evident that no final revelation of these dread topics has ever been given in Palestine or outside it. Like all other things man's belief in retribution after death has grown with his moral growth, and has been clarified in proportion as his moral ideas grew in strength and purity. The gloomy land of shadows beneath the ground; the home of souls beyond the westering sun; the pale reflection of earthly life which Egypt dreamed of, in common with all peoples of whom we have any knowledge, all developed into a twofold region, at the portal of which stood a dread Tribunal before which the soul must appear to receive the sentence which his life demanded.

Jewish and Christian conceptions about retribution after death have yielded obedience to the same law of development. No fresh light by Jesus Christ

was thrown on the beliefs current among His people when He came among them. A little reflection indeed will show that in adopting them as the vehicle of His higher teaching He was but following the methods which all four Evangelists agree in ascribing to Him. The parabolic form of His teaching was preserved when He dwelt on Eschatological truths. He still spake to the common people as they were able to understand Him.

Judgment, it was currently held, would usher in the Messianic Kingdom. It would discriminate between the good and the wicked, the sheep and the goats, the true and the false Israelite; and, when the selection of the righteous had been made, a new heaven and a new earth would be prepared for them, the archetype of which was already formed in the heavenly places. Jesus Christ used these popular beliefs as a fitting frame-work for His moral and spiritual doctrine, and this in spite of the fact that He knew that unspiritual men would persist age after age in putting a materialistic interpretation on thoughts which were too deep for them.

The real truth seems to be, as Matthew Arnold was never tired of insisting, that men have not been able to resist the temptation to treat the record of Christ's words as if it constituted a set of scientific propositions from which reason might draw its conclusions. They have unhappily overlooked the fact, obvious enough when once stated, that all religious teaching is more of the nature of poetry than prose, that it is couched in words "thrown out" at a great Object, never fully describing It, still less defining It,

or exhausting Its content. When Christ's statements about heaven and hell are brought under the clear light of this canon of interpretation, it becomes evident at once that all He desired to insist on was the eternal distinction between good and evil, self-sacrifice and selfishness, living for others and living for self, and the necessary consequence of this distinction, that bliss followed the one life and misery the other. To take the imagery in which He vouchsafed to clothe these pregnant truths as if it were an integral part of the truths themselves, is perhaps the most startling evidence afforded by the long history of Christianity that spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.

Is it then a fair deduction from this view of Christ's teaching to say that no heaven and no hell are revealed or illuminated by Him? Certainly not. The true interpretation of His warnings and promises is that righteousness carries with it its own heaven here and now, and sin its own hell here and now too. Reward and punishment follow conduct automatically. In the highest sense virtue is its own reward, and the sinful soul is its own hell. No materialistic or parabolic imagery can add to the awfulness of this great and sweeping truth. Nothing can be so terrifying and, let it be added, so likely to convert the sinner, as the knowledge that God's spiritual laws move on irresistibly, unhasting, unrelenting, passionless, but absolutely sure. Spiritual wrongdoing is met by spiritual punishment, and from that not even redemption or reconciliation sets the sinner free. The truth, and it is a blessed one, is

that to the redeemed his punishment becomes an instrument of sanctification. He suffers still, but his suffering no longer stings, for it is accepted as the discipline of One Who has been recognised as a wise and loving Father.

The reality of life after death, the gift of a spiritual body as the direct fruit of holy living; the spiritual fact that heaven and hell are inherent in righteousness and sin respectively; the religious belief that if God will that all should be saved then that His Will will not be frustrated; the denial alike of eternal sin and of eternal hell—these promise to be the Eschatological beliefs of the twentieth century. If so, then that century will stand *tantum quantum* on a loftier plane than did its immediate predecessor.

RECAPITULATION.

CHAPTER XIV.

RECAPITULATION.

WE have now taken a rough survey of the religious thought of the day, with a view to determine the form which it seems likely to take in the years that are yet for to come. What has been will be ; the past is our best guide to the future. If we can detect, as we think we have detected, general lines of progress in the past, it is fair to assume that those lines will be maintained still as to their main direction. Catastrophes, social, political or moral may intervene and interrupt the course of equable development, but the record of catastrophes so far as they are known to us goes to show that the waters close after a time, when they have done their priestly work of cleansing, and buried beneath their surface much rubbish. The stream of human progress thus flows once more on its old course ever pouring itself into the ocean of truth, and yet overflowing through the fragrant meadows and by many a busy mart and walled city. It is easy to err in forecasting the detailed events which may happen along its banks, but error in such matters is of subordinate importance. It is

not easy, however, to believe that the stream will cease to flow, or will subside into useless lagoons and poisonous marshes such as once fringed the lower banks of our silver Thames; still less is it possible or conceivable that the stream of progress should be arrested and turned backward. Forward, upward and onward is the motto of human life, for it proceeds from God and returns to God.

We would, however, deprecate the apologetic tone often adopted by Christian defenders in the face of the protagonists of modern thought. It often seems as though their one desire was to pay a Danegeld to get rid of the unwelcome and forbidding invader, and were only anxious to discover how much he would accept as the price of his neutrality. Such an attitude is at once futile and false. Futile, because the enemy, if enemy he be, will not be so bought off, and false because its logical result is to surrender Christian truth, and for no good consideration. The Christian advocate will, if he be wise, make up his mind what Christianity really is, and then bid its impugnors do their worst. He must know what is really of the essence of his religion before he knows how much to include within his defences. If he makes a mistake about this his mistake may be more disastrous than he knows. The suggestion given here is that he take his stand on the revelation of God's love and God's righteousness given by the historical, risen and mystical Christ; and that he distinguish carefully between the essence of that revelation and the form in which it may be expressed.

If this be done it will be found that Christianity presents itself primarily as a religion, as a thirst for God, and a practical means by which man may attain union with Him. The fundamental article of the Christian's creed is that God is our Father, and all the others are but expansions of it. Belief in that is the differentia of the Christian's religion, that by which it is marked off from all others. All fruitful theology, therefore, must centre round that truth, and must from time to time return to it for verification or correction. Whatever the theology we construct about the Divine Nature it must be at its best symbolical not logical, suggestive not defining, made for practical guidance and not for intellectual satisfaction.

The same caution which is imposed on our treatment of the doctrine about God must be observed when we come to treat of man's powers. The science of comparative psychology is yet in its infancy, but young as it is, it has already warned us that there are more secrets locked up in man's nature than were dreamt of in our fathers' philosophy. The higher psychology will come in probably to revise our doctrine of miracles, with as much imperiousness as the scientists' doctrine of the uniformity of law has shown in its attitude. We shall probably find that we may have to revise our doctrine of miracles, but also that no such revision can succeed in expelling from experience the action of forces which are supernormal. Of man's higher side we shall learn more, and shall find in consequence that the Biblical doctrine of faith is

far more scientifically rooted in facts than the school of Bentham, or of Hume, or Mill were once willing to admit. With this will go a deeper appreciation of the power of prayer as one of the laws under which man's higher nature is appointed to work. Men will cease to pit uniformity of law against prayer because they will recognise that prayer itself comes under law.

Men fear too sometimes that the Bible in becoming more human has also become less Divine. Away with the faithless fear! Let us say rather that our appreciation of the truly human character of the Bible has made its Divinity more manifest than ever. Nay, Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel, Paul and Peter, even the Lord Himself, stand out the more prominently from the canvas of history because they are seen to be so truly human. Humanity is the most Divine thing we know, and it is through it that all Revelation must come. We see how prophet, psalmist, and apostle were led by the Divine Spirit, and we glorify God in them. It is not Biblical criticism which is irreligious, or the cause of irreligion, but it is the narrow-souled denial of plain facts about the Bible. Two hundred years of reverent and laborious criticism have not been in vain, whatever the fearful or the petrified soul may say.

The time has come too for approaching the great truths of the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Church from the religious rather than from the scholastic standpoint. We have had enough and to spare of logic-chopping expended on these

spiritual verities, with the result that wisdom has been darkened, and faith made more difficult. The religious leader who shall enable an age weary of disputation to return to the pure fount of religion, and find God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself will deserve better of his generation than the victorious general, or the successful statesman.

Lastly, we have tried to point out how comparatively simple is the Christian teaching about the Four Last Things. Its very simplicity indeed it is which lends it its saving power.

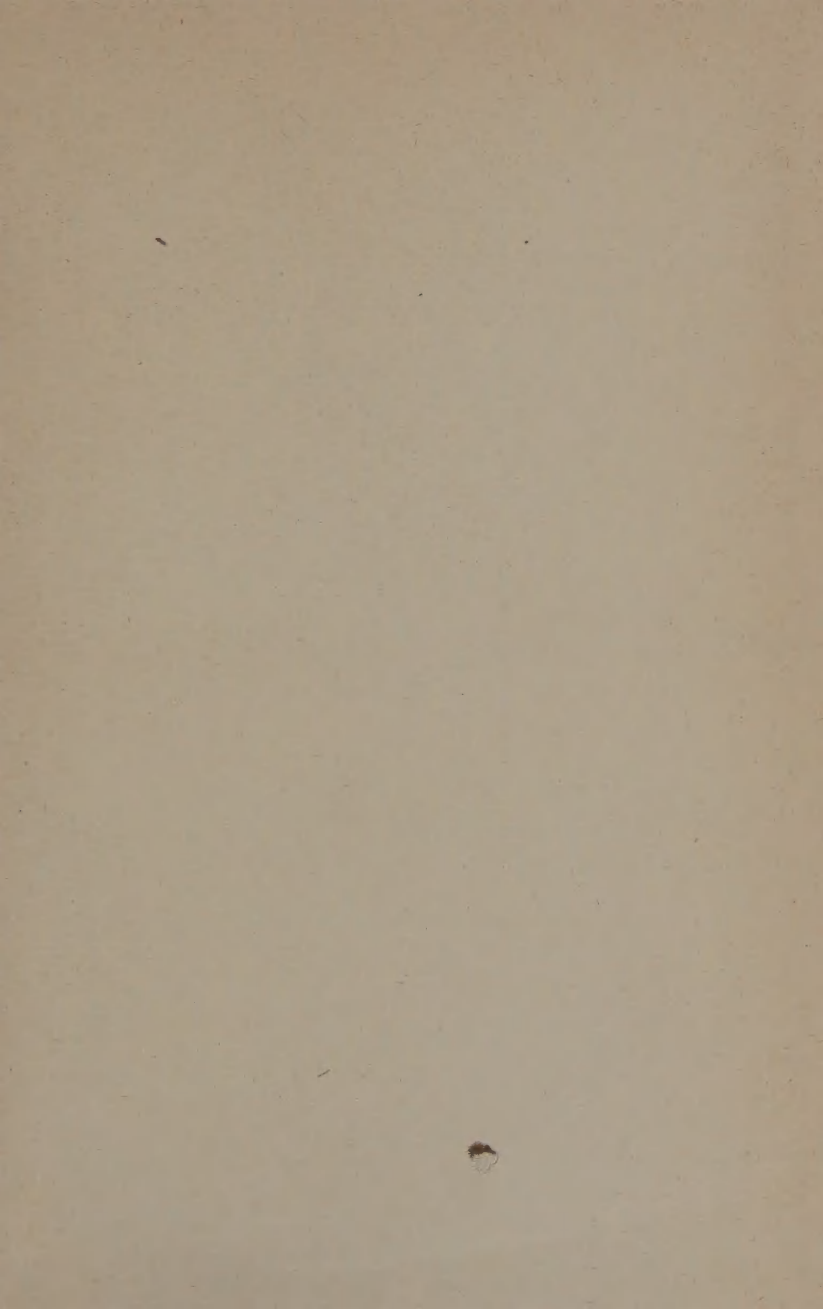
The age on which we are now entered promises to be pre-eminently the age of the Spirit. The very strength of materialism is one of the proofs of this. For humanity has always been at the point of an outpouring of the Spirit when at its lowest degradation. Man cannot live by bread alone, and when he has tried the experiment to the utmost the reaction sets in. The remarkable movement towards Christian Reunion in Scotland; the confederation for certain purposes of the Free Churches in England; the joint meeting of the Congregational and Baptist Unions, all show a strong movement towards union on the basis of the possession of a common spiritual life. The very fact that psychology is becoming more and more recognised as a leading feature in our science of religion seems another indication of a return towards trust in the Spirit, and the subordination to the Spirit of the letter of creed, canon or organisation. We are beginning to understand more profoundly than ever how true it is that "no man can say that

Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Worship in spirit and in truth; acceptance of Jesus as the highest Revelation of God, and love of the brotherhood of mankind—these promise to be the chief forces in determining at once the religion and the theology of this twentieth century.

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